

RICHARD STONEMAN



THE BOOK OF
ALEXANDER
THE GREAT

A LIFE OF THE CONQUEROR

I.B. TAURIS

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TRANSLATED AND INTRODUCED BY
RICHARD STONEMAN

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Introduction

Three great heroes dominate the imaginative world of the Greeks of the modern era: Alexander the Great; Digenis Akritas the border lord of the Euphrates; and Erotokritos the hero of Cretan romance.¹ Digenis is celebrated in song and poetry; Erotokritos is the hero of a famous poem; but Alexander is the protagonist of a large number of works in both prose and verse as well as being the hero of countless folktales.² The best known of these books in modern Greece is the *Book of Alexander the Great* (in Greek, *He Phyllada tou Megalexantrou*). It was first printed in Venice in 1670, though the earliest surviving copy is from the edition of 1699. It was reprinted repeatedly in the following two centuries and has never been out of print since 1700.³ The standard edition for most of the twentieth century was that of A.A. Pallis (1935), for many years Press Attaché at the Greek embassy in London. His edition was based on a nineteenth-century version; in 1977 a

new scholarly edition was prepared by G. Veloudis, and this is now the standard.⁴

The *Phyllada* is the story of Alexander with which Greeks grow up and on which their image of the conqueror, however much history they may learn later, begins to be formed. This is an Alexander who embodies the essence of *Romiosyni* (Orthodox 'Greekness' as against pagan 'Hellenism'): he protects Christian culture in a world full of pagans and infidels, he goes on to become the ruler of the whole world, and his spirit of curiosity leads him to explore every corner of the Earth, even as far as the borders of Paradise itself. Only death will not yield to his conquering zeal. Inspiring intense loyalty and love among his commanders and courtiers, his wife and mother, he seeks wisdom through his trust in the God of Heaven and Earth.

The Alexander of the *Phyllada* has much in common with the hero of folklore, the world conqueror and Christian hero, the father (or brother) of the mermaids, whose universal rule keeps the world at peace. Many stories about Alexander are told in the oral traditions of modern Greece. His search for the Water of Life is prominent among them, a search in which he is always thwarted, though his close relatives, the mermaids, are able to drink of it and show their eternal loyalty by demanding of storm-tossed sailors that they cry: 'Alexander the Great lives and rules and keeps the world at peace'.⁵ Alexander's footsteps, or those of his horse Bucephalus, are imprinted in rocks in Drama and

Philippi; his palace at Sounion still exhibits its ruined columns; he grew the asses' ears usually attributed to King Midas; on Zakynthos it was told that a queen took the Sun god for a husband and bore his son, Alexander, who sought the Water of Life but was cheated of it; on Crete he had to seek the Water beyond the Clashing Rocks and, like Jason, to kill a dragon to obtain it; charms to still storms on Samos and on Corfu entail invocation of his sisters.⁶

Medieval developments of the Alexander story

The *Phyllada* is just one of many visions of Alexander to emerge from the Byzantine preoccupation with the classical past, but it is the one with the highest aspirations to literary quality. Along with the Spanish *Libro de Alexandre* and the French *Roman d'Alexandre*, it is a work that deserves a place in any shelf of 'Great Books on Alexander'. Its antecedents are long, going back ultimately to the Greek *Alexander Romance*, a popular Hellenistic biography of the conqueror probably composed, in its essentials, in the third century BC – though the earliest datable version belongs to the third century AD.⁷

I shall not trace the history of the ancient Greek versions again here in detail, and refer to my earlier discussions,⁸ but will concentrate on the way the story developed from the composition of the ninth-century abridged version known as epsilon (Ε).

The importance of epsilon was first realised by Jürgen Trumpf who published an edition of it in 1974. Surviving intact in just one manuscript in Oxford (Bodl. Barroccianus 17), it is a reworking of the alpha (α) and beta (β) versions of the *Romance* that offers a complete reorganisation of the story in an effort to make its inconsistencies of geography and chronology less apparent. Its author was attempting for the first time to create a 'fixed' literary work on the basis of the fluid tradition represented by the manuscripts of the beta-recension (ca AD 300–550). But it quickly became absorbed into a new rewriting that attempted to combine most of the text of beta, in an expanded form, with plentiful other new material as well as epsilon, now known as gamma (γ).⁹ Both epsilon and gamma are strongly coloured by their Byzantine origins, notably in the acclamation of Alexander as victor after the Olympic Games.¹⁰

Epsilon became the basis of the 'Middle Greek' *Romance*, probably composed shortly before the fall of Constantinople to the Turks in 1453. (It refers, for example, to the 'Land of the Latins', i.e. the Holy Land.) There are eleven widely varying manuscripts of this romance;¹¹ three of them (all from manuscripts of the sixteenth to seventeenth centuries) have been edited and thus give a conspectus of most of the variants.¹² The 'Middle Greek' version was also translated into Arabic by an Orthodox priest of Mt Sinai, named Yusuf ibn Suwaydan, in 1671.¹³ In addition there was

another, now lost, Byzantine version (before 1389) whose existence can be deduced from the form taken by the Serbian version of the *Romance*: this lost version is known as *ζ (zeta).¹⁴ Other Slavic versions (Russian, Bulgarian) seem to derive from epsilon, with the latter versions adding material from the Serbian (i.e. ultimately from *zeta).¹⁵ This topic has not been very thoroughly studied and needs further research.

The 'Middle Greek' version is the proximate source of the *Phyllada*, which is written in a simple, folksy form of modern Greek rather than the more elevated style of its predecessors. It differs in a number of ways from its predecessors: see below, pp. XX–XXII.

But this was not the only tradition of Alexander-writing that was known in Byzantium. From the early Byzantine period elements of Alexander's story had been told by chroniclers, starting with John Malalas in the sixth century, who attributed to him the building of something called the Strategion in Constantinople (which of course had not been founded in Alexander's day) and also told the story of his visit to Candace. The story about the Strategion reappeared in the eighth-century compilation of lore about the city known as the *Patria Constantinopoleos*. In the seventh century the *Chronicon Paschale* recounted several episodes of Alexander's career, all of them events from the *Romance* rather than the historical record: these include the story of Nectanebo's flight to Pella in disguise and Alexander's visit to Jerusalem. The latter became a

favourite theme in Byzantine chronicles, reflecting the attention given to Hebrew and Old Testament themes by many Byzantine writers (and also by the *Phyllada*). It appears in the eighth-century chronicle of George Syncellus and the ninth-century one of George the Sinner (George the Monk). In the eleventh century George Cedrenus included the visit to Jerusalem, the story of Nectanebo and the visit to the Brahmins; but Zonaras, who wrote a history of the world from the Creation to the year 1118, besides including the visit to Jerusalem, was also able to use historical material deriving from Plutarch's *Life* of the conqueror.

Alexander also appeared in apocalyptic literature, such as the *Apocalypse* of Pseudo-Methodius (late seventh century) and the *Apocalypse* of Pseudo-Daniel where he appears as the 'Great Philip' who is to be the god-given ruler of Rome, Alexandria, Thessalonike and 'the Seven-hilled City' (i.e., Constantinople). In probably about the sixth century, Alexander appeared, also under the name of Philip, in a work known as *The Debate on Religion at the Sassanian Court*.¹⁶ In this, an omen that is also in the *Alexander Romance* reappears and is similarly interpreted: Alexander's father, Philip, sees a bird lay an egg, from which a snake emerges, wriggles once around the egg, then re-enters it and dies. This is interpreted by the court seer as a prophecy that Alexander will encircle the world as the snake that emerges from the egg does, but then return to his starting point and die.

Like the treatments in epsilon and gamma, these scattered references evoke the image of a Good King, a Byzantine emperor designated by God as a world ruler. This is the view of Alexander that also pervades the *Phyllada*.¹⁷

The *Alexander Romance* was certainly known in the eleventh century as it is listed as one of the volumes contained in the library of a Cappadocian landowner, Eustathios Boilas (d. *ca.* 1059). It is tempting to imagine that this was the actual manuscript that is now in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, Parisinus gr. 1711, datable 1013–1124, but it is perhaps more likely that it was a copy of gamma or epsilon. In the twelfth century Western Romance began to become popular in Byzantium and this will undoubtedly have given a context for the enjoyment of the home-grown story of Alexander as well. The scene of jousting that appears in the *Phyllada* no doubt owes its presence to this Western influence, which is otherwise not much evident. Alexander's story also had an impact on the thirteenth-century heroic poem, *Digenis Akritas*, which included the supernatural birth of the hero, his fights with wild beasts and an encounter with an Amazon, who 'was descended from some Amazons taken by Alexander from the Brahmans' (*Digenis* 6. 386–7).

There are also several complete texts from the later Byzantine period presenting the story of Alexander in one form or another.¹⁸ A single manuscript preserves

the 'Byzantine Poem' (as it is known),¹⁹ which is a refashioning in verse (the fifteen-syllable *politikos stichos*) of the beta-recension, with some additional material from alpha. It is dated in the manuscript to the year 1388. A century and a half later, in 1529, another verse version of the story was published in Venice: this is known as the *Rimada*. Again it is in *politikos stichos*, this time in rhyming couplets, and it is attached to the name of Demetrios Zenos, who was probably the man who prepared the sheets for the press.²⁰ It is a fuller version than the 'Poem', based on alpha but incorporating elements from beta and lambda, as well as an unidentified prose version. There is also one surviving manuscript of this poem; the printed version ran to fourteen editions.

In addition, a narrative in *politikos stichos* about 'Alexander and Semiramis' probably dates from the fourteenth or fifteenth century: it is preserved in two manuscripts of 1619 and 1636 respectively.²¹ It is evidence for a passion for storytelling about Alexander that goes beyond the lines laid down by the various versions of the *Romance*.

In 1499 the printing house of Aldus Manutius in Venice produced a collection of *Letters of Various Philosophers*, edited by the humanist, Marcus Musurus (1470–1517), which includes three supposed examples of the correspondence of Alexander.²² Twenty years later, a collection of apophthegms was published by the Greek College in Rome, edited by Arsenios Apostolis,

archbishop of Monemvasia (1468/9–1535): it includes 31 sayings attributed to Alexander.²³

We catch only glimpses of the continuing development of the Alexander story into the early years of the *Tourkokratia* and into the seventeenth century. He appears in his due place in many of the chronicles composed in this period,²⁴ in which a gradual increase in historical knowledge is to be observed. In particular, Georgios Kontaris of Kozani devoted a section of his *Ancient and Useful Stories of the Famous City of Athens* (Venice 1675) to Alexander. Veloudis writes: ‘Here there remains no trace of the contemporary Folk-Books about Alexander. The author explicitly bases himself on Plutarch and his narrative is in fact no more than a free rewriting of his source’ – though Roxane is still presented as the daughter of Darius! (Xylander’s edition of Plutarch had appeared in Basel in 1572, but the first edition published in Greek lands came out in Bucharest in 1704.²⁵)

A more curious reappearance of Alexander is in the book, *The Subjugation of China* by Chrysanthos Notaras, patriarch of Jerusalem (d. 1731), which reprises the story of Alexander’s enclosure of Gog and Magog in the context of a travel account of Central Asia.²⁶ But this work brings us beyond the date of publication of the *Phyllada*; and as the eighteenth century proceeds, the glimmers from Renaissance humanism and the European Enlightenment that reached Greece led to a more historical approach to the history of

Alexander, though the two traditions continued in parallel for most of the period.²⁷ A remarkable phenomenon is the study by Dimitrios Gobjelas (1822), dedicated to Tsar Alexander I, which surveys for the first time the traditions about Alexander in Arabic and Persian literature. The first true biography of Alexander was written by Dimitris Pyrrhos in 1846.

In some of these works, from the thirteenth century onwards, the Alexander who conquered the Persians seems to be implicitly compared to the Byzantine emperor beleaguered by the Turks.²⁸ Macedonians occasionally appear in *Erotokritos* and are the only people to be ruled by a king rather than a duke (II. 215ff). When hope of deliverance from Ottoman rule rested in the seventeenth century on the fellow Orthodox Russians, several now obscure writers called on Russian leaders (such as the Cossack leader, Chmielnicki) to become a new Alexander.²⁹ Alexander remained a symbol of Greek nationhood well into the eighteenth century. In 1789 Rigas Velestinlis published his 'Patriotic Poem', a call to national uprising, in which, in stanza 28, Alexander is evoked as a figure of the kind to drive out the hated Turks.³⁰

The Ottoman world of Alexander

It is worth spending a little time on the awareness of Alexander in the Turkish-speaking world of the

Ottoman Empire, which provided the historical background for the appearance of the *Phyllada*. The story of Alexander had become familiar to the Turks through the *Iskendername* of Ahmedi, which appeared in about 1390, when Beyazit I was engaged in resistance to the onslaughts of Tamerlane. The book is in part a translation of the *Iskandernamēh* of the twelfth-century Persian writer Nezami, and includes the familiar episodes from the Persian version of the Alexander story: the participation of the philosophers, Plato, Aristotle and Hippocrates, is very great, not least in the collection of 'Sayings of the Philosophers' that follows the hero's death;³¹ but the bulk of the central portion of the poem is taken up by a long disquisition by Aristotle on Near Eastern history and in particular the life of Prophet Muhammad.

There does not seem to be any interaction between this Ottoman version and the contemporary Greek versions. Stories of Alexander seem not to be particularly widespread in the Ottoman world: the great traveller Evliya Celebi (1611–85), who visited most parts of the Ottoman lands, knew only a few stories of Alexander. He uses the conqueror as his reference point for establishing the date of Constantinople's foundation ('after Alexander'),³² while the talismans he describes at Trabzon are similar in kind to those mentioned in the *Patria Constantinopoleos*: 'during the time of Alexander the Great, a master of magic arrived and, in order to provide the monks and patriarchs with

sustenance, he erected a column in the sea outside the Moloz Gate and placed on it a bronze fish, fashioned like a *hamsi*. On the day of Pentecost this talisman emitted a sound that made all the *hamsi* in the Black Sea swarm into Trabzon harbour and hurl themselves on shore.³³

Needless to say, there are echoes of the Ottoman context in the *Phyllada*. At one point Darius refers to Alexander as a *klepht* (brigand). Various technical terms of Ottoman rule pervade the book: horses, especially fine ones, are referred to as *at* (with the Greek plural *atia*: 112, etc.); noblemen are *afthentades* (a Greek word which became Turcicised as *effendi*, 54, etc.); the subject people are *rayas* (*rayiades*, 80); tax or tribute is *charatzi* (Turkish *haraç*, the poll tax, 56, etc.); and Alexander's governors are *voivodes* (a Slavic term naturalised in the Ottoman Empire, 189, etc.). But in general the book is an interesting document of the lack of interpenetration between the Turkish rulers and the Greek ruled: their stories of Alexander resemble each other hardly at all.

The historical context of the Phyllada

The *Phyllada*, as was mentioned earlier, was first published in Venice. In the years following the sack of Constantinople in 1204, and even more after the Ottoman conquest in 1453, Greek scholars left their

homeland and sought refuge in Italy where the new enthusiasm for classical letters had begun with the career of Petrarch (1304–74). Manuel Chrysoloras (*ca.* 1350–1415) had been the teacher of Greek to many of the Italian humanists, and his daughter was married to Francesco Filelfo, himself a translator of Homer and an envoy between the Byzantine and Milanese courts. Though Greeks had settled in various parts of Italy, Venice had been a focus for Greek immigration even as early as the twelfth century when one Jacob, known as Jacobus Veneticus Graecus, translated a number of works by Aristotle into Latin.³⁴ While the major focus of humanist activity was Florence, there were a number of enthusiasts for Greek culture in Venice, no doubt stimulated by the city's imperial connections with Crete.³⁵ But the establishment of the printing press of Aldus Manutius (1450–1515) in Venice led Greek writers and scholars to gather near him. Aldus was the first to print books in Greek, and his beautiful types remain a byword for elegance as well as a historical landmark.

The Greek Confraternity was founded in Venice in 1498 and its church, San Giorgio, finished in 1572. Following the 25 years of warfare between the Venetians and the Turks (1645–69) that resulted in the loss of Crete, many Greek refugees left Crete for Venice, bringing with them manuscripts, icons and other precious objects, which were in due course bequeathed to the Confraternity and form the nucleus of the

collection of the Hellenic Institute in Venice (established in 1951).³⁶ Perhaps these counted among their number the printer, Nikolaos Glykis, in whose Venice printing house the *Phyllada* first appeared in 1670. Glykis is in all probability also the author of the preface, and maybe of the whole text as printed.³⁷ In the preface he explains his reasons for publishing the book: it is a source of entertaining stories – ‘advice, conversations, questions and answers, letters, embassies, wars, victories, trophies, triumphs of monarchs, kings, commanders, generals and other worthy men’. It will also be a source of moral examples and its tone is one of elegiac lament for human life, ‘vanity of vanities’. There is no trace here of Alexander as a symbol of resistance or conquest such as he was to become in the Enlightenment. Rather he is a Christian hero embodying the spirit of *Romiosyni*, a quality which endures wherever Greeks are found, whether as a political entity or not.

Content

The *Phyllada* follows the broad outlines of the story told in the *Romance*, though there are a number of changes. The beginning and end of the text, for example – the historical introduction and the moralising conclusion – are new to the *Phyllada*, and Alexander is less of a Christian hero and preacher than he is in the Middle Greek versions. Alexander’s father is the

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exiled Pharaoh Nectanebo (Ektanebos); he makes war on Darius and Porus; he visits Jerusalem and the Land of the Blessed (who take the place of the Brahmins); he encounters the Amazons, the Unclean Nations and Queen Candace. He descends into the sea in a diving bell, but, surprisingly, the story of the flying machine is absent. (Neither the descent nor the flight were in the Middle Greek versions.) However, the tone of the story is somewhat altered and from the beginning Alexander is established as a mighty conqueror. His first exploits (after a victory over the Koumanoi, a Central Asian people, a first diplomatic exchange with Darius and the conquest of Athens) are against the kings of the West, including Rome. The pagan gods of both Athens and Rome shock Alexander and justify their suppression, but in Rome Alexander is delighted by a prophecy found in the Book of Daniel that he will become ruler of the East and the West. (This last episode is displaced from Jerusalem where it occurs in the earlier versions.) The voyage to Egypt and the visit to Troy follow. (The latter was fuller in the Middle Greek.) Then, in Jerusalem, the prophet Jeremiah appears to Alexander in a vision, as he is to do repeatedly hereafter, to prophesy his conquests. The Persian conquest occupies chapters 100–146, and then begins Alexander's great journey into the Unknown, his long encounter with the Blessed and the journey into the Land of Darkness. The war with Porus follows (154–173), though the Indian adventures are

more attenuated than in earlier versions, and the 'Letter to Aristotle about India' is omitted. Next come the Amazon and Candace episodes. In the course of the latter the Queen's son, Kondavlouses, takes Alexander into the Cave of the Gods; but here he meets, not Sesonchosis as in the *Romance*, but all the Greek gods and pagan kings bound in chains. Alexander's death soon follows, and his wife Roxandra commits suicide over his body. The concluding words are the quotation from Solomon: 'Vanity of vanities; all is vanity'.

So, from the outset of his career, Alexander is the destined conqueror. His overcoming of king after king is no surprise, but the message that earthly power is nothing is never far away. The moral that lay largely implicit in the *Romance*, where only the Brahmans expound the virtues of a life opposed in all its ways to Alexander's, is a leitmotif of the whole of the *Phyllada*; from the warning pillar set out by Sesonchosis to describe his failure to penetrate the Land of Darkness to Paradise, to the insistence of the Blessed that Alexander cannot visit Eden. Sesonchosis appears to Alexander again in the Cave of the Gods to rub in the message that pride and arrogance can only lead to eternal damnation, and to warn him of his eventual death. There is thus no need for the episode of the oracular trees to predict Alexander's death, and in fact Jeremiah reappears in a dream (200) to impel Alexander's final preparations for death. The narrative of Alexander's death in the *Romance*, which is closely tied to historical

detail (though poisoning is only one of several possible interpretations of his untimely end), is here divorced from history: the assassins of Alexander are fictional characters whose names bear no resemblance to their historical counterparts. Alexander, like his counterparts in folktale, rails against death: Gleixner (1961, 106) mentions a story in which he builds himself a castle in which to hide from Charos, the personification of death.³⁸

A second leitmotif of the *Phyllada* is Alexander's devotion to the God of Sabaoth. So he laughs at the Athenians: 'if the Greek gods were real gods, perhaps they would help you.' In Jerusalem he comes ready to liberate the Jews from the idolaters (presumably the Persian rulers) with the help of the God of Sabaoth, but they reply that they are worshippers of Sabaoth already! There is no need here for the episode of the conversion of Alexander to Judaism. As in the Byzantine chroniclers, the religious mood is largely determined by the Old Testament; Solomon is a prominent presence (21, 29, 219, etc.), the Tower of Babel is referred to (84), as is Goliath 'the Hellene' (i.e. pagan, 93), the Blessed tell the story of Adam and Eve (150) and there are frequent Biblical phrases (81, 219). In 84 the assertion of the Blessed that 'only God knows' sounds curiously like a familiar Muslim catchphrase, but this may be coincidence. There is not a single mention of Christ in the book,³⁹ though Judas the betrayer makes an appearance in 208 when Alexander is betrayed, and

the disposition in Alexander's will (212) that Perdiccas is to look after Olympias as his own mother inevitably recalls Jesus' command to John from the Cross: 'Son, behold thy mother.' Alexander, despite all his differences from Christ, fulfils a somewhat Christ-like role in the narrative.⁴⁰ His career of warfare has brought universal peace. His death is not to be followed by a resurrection, but is a death that anyone can identify with; nonetheless, we must perhaps have at the back of our minds the Alexander of folk tradition who has never died, but 'lives and reigns and keeps the world at peace'.

Classical knowledge in the *Phyllada* is very limited. The account of Rome in 61–2 is a wondrous confusion of titbits about Solomon, Cleopatra and Troy, though when Alexander visits Troy itself (73–4) he seems to be reasonably well-informed about its legend. The Olympic Games are rightly located at Pisa 'in the eparchy of Gastouni' (14). Athens is regarded as the capital of Greece, a role it never had before 1834. The pagans all worship a single (false) god, Apollo, whether in Athens, Rome or Babylon. Many of the classical names are invented, such as Ouranios (47), Anaxarchus (21), Talamedos (67f), to say nothing of the Persian and other names. In 150 the Brahman leader Dindimus has become, inexplicably, Evaenthes. Alexander's chief companions are Ptolemy, Seleukos and Philon(es). The first is a plausible companion for

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the king, the second was a much younger contemporary, but the appearance of Philon (69, 72, 136, 160, etc.), or Phidon, in versions from gamma onwards, is a puzzle: none of the historical candidates is of particular importance. The classical past has been forgotten in the new Christian world of the Greeks and, as K. Mitsakis elegantly put it, Alexander was 'born an antique pagan, but died a Byzantine Christian'.

Preface

To the lovers of History, dear Readers – the preamble of the History

According to the best researchers, dear readers, history is an exemplary representation of past events, a teacher of a right way of life, a revelation of things which because of the lapse of time have disappeared into oblivion, and a guide to good morality. When united with an exceptional sweetness of the occurrences and heroic achievements that form the subject of the history, it will draw everyone to read it: this is bound to be the case with the present account of that great king of Macedonia. History, as I say, is pleasant, charming, inspiring and useful because of the variety of elements from which it is woven: debates, dialogues, interrogations, letters, embassies, battles, victories, trophies, the triumphs of kings, commanders, generals and other distinguished men, as well as the varied and often surprising ways of life of the

Persians, Indians, Arabs, Macedonians, Greeks and Romans. This would appear most pleasing through the authority of the narrative, which I trust you will receive with open hands. The pleasure of the story of the heroic deeds of this man is to be treasured along with exposition of noble virtues finely displayed by this same man, which will undoubtedly become models for every kind of education in public life. In the upbringing of Alexander you will find the four cardinal virtues in action: intelligence, bravery, justice and temperance. These elements are mixed in a fourfold combination, which from the beginning of his career was clearly in evidence in the account of his most noble deeds. So the careful reader and attentive searcher of worldly virtues who reads attentively, along with the pleasure it will produce, will see as in a historical mirror the various aspects of foreign wars, the victories that go beyond counting, and will assemble, if he reads discriminatingly, a colourful selection of noble and heroic virtues. Here are the practice of morality, the philosophy that leads kings, bravery combined with wisdom, and the balance of internal and external passions that characterise a commander who is master of himself. Enthusiasm and ambition for what is best stand alongside a complete resistance to and contempt for all faults: these have no place when wisdom and its companions triumph. His wisdom, too, moderated his counsels and his actions, and enabled him to raise so many trophies over the kings of Europe, Asia, Africa

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and India; it showed him to be a philosopher, a conquering king and a lawgiver. It enabled him to maintain a deep and undisturbed tranquillity against all odds, it showed him the way to rule foreign nations and to combine a disorganised rabble of states into a single well-organised monarchy, to employ wealth and glory for private and public benefit without falling into indiscipline and low forms of luxury, keeping his eye always on his immortal fame – these are the gifts that wisdom and philosophy are accustomed to bestow on their worshippers. Consider the greatness of soul of the hero, how he subdued his own weaknesses in order to subdue the whole world to himself. This indeed is a history which will give both pleasure and instruction. In it will be found all the habits and customs which he employed in order to show what it is to be a king of the whole world. And as stated, if it were possible for human happiness to be created by history, then it certainly ought to grow from this one above all, since it contains all the elements that are expected in a history. So, gentle readers, accept this little book for its generous intentions and encourage the hopes of its editor and printer, who wishes you every happiness in what you desire and pray for. Be well!

Venice, 1670

The Book of Alexander the Great

(I Phyllada tou Megalexandrou)

*The Birth, Deeds and Death of Alexander
the Macedonian*

1. Prologue

Macedonia is a large region of Europe, which is bordered on the north by Dalmatia, Serbia, Bulgaria and Thrace; on the east by the Aegean Sea; on the south by Epirus and Thessaly; and on the west by the Ionian Sea. Once upon a time it reached the peak of greatness through the actions of several kings, especially Philip, the father of Alexander, and his son. It first began to achieve fame because of Philip's many wars which he waged against the Olynthians and other Greek republics; he became king in the year 5136 after the Creation of the World. In the sixteenth year

of his reign, his wife Olympias gave birth to the great and wondrous Alexander, who however was not the offspring of Philip but of Ektanebos the king of Egypt, the marvellous astronomer and magician, as will be described briefly in the following story.

2. King Ektanebos

This marvellous astronomer, King Ektanebos, ruled all Egypt by his magic arts. By his spells he was able to discover what was going to occur, and on most occasions he did not go out to war, but stayed in his palace and cast spells. Whoever came to attack his country turned back to their own lands in a poor condition. So, when the kings saw the evil he was doing to them, they made a joint agreement to attack and destroy Ektanebos. These kings were Darius the king of Persia, the king of Lenthia and Iberia, and many others; they assembled their armies and set off on campaign against Ektanebos.

3. The soldier Ververis comes to Ektanebos

A soldier of Ektanebos, named Ververis, seeing the forces that were descending on the king, ran to him and said: 'I have discovered, your majesty, that an enormous force is descending on you to make war

on you; quickly, take command, so that they do not obliterate us.' When Ektanebos heard these words, he said to Ververis with a laugh: 'Come on, relax, I will cause them with a single word to turn back to their own countries, without harming us at all.' So he got up, went into his palace, and started to carry out a divination. What he saw was that he would lose his kingdom and would be defeated. He swooned and started to weep bitterly. 'O beauteous castle of Egypt', he cried, 'I adorned you with so much wealth and now I am going to lose you!' Immediately he shaved his cheeks, changed his clothes and fled from Egypt undetected, taking with him as much money as he could.

4. The lords enter the palace and fail to find Ektanebos

The lords of Egypt hastened to the palace in the customary way, to consult with the king about the advancing army; but they found no trace of him, only a letter which read as follows: 'Beloved lords of Egypt and colleagues, I wish to inform you that, observing that I would be unable to resist the army descending on me, I have fled from Egypt. I will return in 24 years. I am departing as an old man but will return as a young one (he said this in reference to his son Alexander). I beg you not to be cast down, but

to erect a statue in the centre of Egypt, to depict my features on it and to place my crown on the top of the statue. If anyone shall come and stand before the statue, and the crown shall fall upon his head make obeisance to him. He will assuredly be my son.' When the lords saw this letter, they were enraged at his flight, but they immediately ordered the construction of a statue, just as he had ordered, and they placed his crown upon its head. Ektanebos, meanwhile, made his way to Macedon, the country of Philip, which anciently was called Pella. There he acquired a reputation as a great magician and astrologer. His magic arts gave correct replies to all questions that were put to him.

5. Olympias

Philip the King of Macedon had a beautiful wife, Olympias by name, who was very sorrowful that she had not borne a son, and was terribly afraid that Philip would reject her because of her childlessness. In those days Philip went away to fight against his enemies. Before he left, he called Olympias and said to her, 'See, I am going to go away to war. During the time I am here, do your best to ensure that I find a son of my blood when I return from the war. If I do not find one, my eyes will no longer wish to behold you.' Then he departed. When Olympias understood Philip's

intentions, she started to think what she should do. She was very upset and paralysed with anxiety.

One of her slaves, seeing her so miserable, said to her: 'Your majesty, I have discovered that a foreign gentleman has arrived in the castle, a famous magician and astronomer. Everything he foretells comes true and he never makes a mistake. He will be able to do something to help you conceive a child.' When the queen heard the slave's words, she immediately replied: 'Go and find him, as quickly as possible, and bring him here to see me.'

6. Ektanebos comes to Queen Olympias

The slave hurried off and brought Ektanebos to the queen. 'Are you the famous man of whose wizardry I have heard so much?' she asked him. 'Yes,' replied Ektanebos, 'I am he. If you have any orders for me, give me the details and send me off to carry them out.' Olympias sent away all those who were present, and explained the situation to Ektanebos. 'My husband, seeing that I have not produced a son, said to me, "If I don't find you have a son by me by the time I come back from my journey, my eyes will no longer wish to see you." So I beg you, if you can find some way to ensure that I conceive a child, please do so as soon as possible, because the king has gone away today, and if he comes back and finds me with child,

he may think that it is a bastard.’ ‘Cheer up, your majesty,’ replied Ektanebos; ‘I will conjure the god Ammon with my enchantments to come to you and sleep with you, so that you will give birth to a male child and your anxiety will be resolved. He will cause you to conceive the child. When you see him, do not be frightened, but do whatever he tells you. Now I must go and cast my spells to make him come to you.’ He left the house and went off to cast his spells, so that he would appear to Olympias in her sleep as if he were the god Ammon.

7. Olympias’ dream

That night, when she was asleep, Olympias saw how the god Ammon entered the palace and embraced her, and treated her kindly. She saw how he laid her down on a golden bed and said to her: ‘Today your womb will conceive a child.’ As soon as Olympias woke up, she called Ektanebos to her, and said, ‘Last night I saw that god in a dream. I would very much like him to remain with me.’ ‘In what form did you see him?’ Ektanebos asked. ‘Like a goat with great horns;’ she said, ‘use your arts to make him come to me tonight as well.’ ‘If you wish to accomplish your desire,’ Ektanebos said, ‘give me leave to remain in your palace, so that I can bring you the company of the god Ammon.’ ‘I will give you whatever permission you require,’ she

replied, 'so long as you can bring the god himself to bear me company.' Ektanebos said: 'Tonight I will bring him to you without fail.'

8. How Ektanebos played a trick on Olympias

When Ektanebos had received permission from Olympias to remain in her palace, he hurried off and fetched some large horns and a goat skin. He put the horns on his head and wrapped himself in the goat skin, so that he resembled the god; that evening he hastened to Olympias' bed. After remaining with her a short time, he said to her, 'Queen, the child you will bear will be a male child; he will be distinguished for charm and will encircle the whole world.' Then he slipped out of the bed and went to his own quarters. Presently Olympias arose, hurried to Ektanebos and said: 'Last night I had a most delightful time with the god; please make him come to me again tonight.' Ektanebos said, 'If you give me carte blanche, I will ensure that he comes to you every night.' Then Olympias said: 'Shall I give you permission again? I tell you there will be no hindrance: do as you did before.' When Ektanebos had been given this freedom, he came to her all the time and did whatever he liked, by day and by night. After some time had gone by, Olympias became pregnant and began to be aware of the child in her belly. She summoned Ektanebos and started to weep,

saying: ‘What am I going to do? If my husband happens to come home and finds me pregnant, I am afraid he will kill me.’ Ektanebos replied ‘Leave it to me to steer us through the situation.’

9. Ektanebos, by magic, sends Philip a dream

Ektanebos hurried off and fetched one of the birds known as owls, and cast a spell over it so that Philip would have a dream vision about Olympias’ pregnancy. So, in his dream he saw Ammon and Olympias together, as he said to her ‘Soon you will give birth to a male child who will encircle the whole world.’ Philip trembled when he saw this; waking up, he called one of his most reliable Magi and described the dream to him. The Magus answered him: ‘The dream you saw is a true one: Him whom you saw in your house, take him for a god, for the gods are filled with desire for the beauty of Olympias, and wished to make a child with her.’ When Philip heard this, he was deceived by the Magus’s words: he departed and hurried to his house. There he found Olympias very upset, but he reassured her, saying, ‘If the gods want to do such a thing, what can we do to oppose them? They have the power to do whatever they want with us. Do not distress yourself any more about the matter.’ When Olympias heard Philip asserting that it was a god who had had intercourse with her, she was exultant with

relief. Nonetheless, some days later Philip decided to question her about the course of events, because he had some doubts.

10. Ektanebos' metamorphosis

When Ektanebos learnt of this, he quickly changed himself into a terrifying beast, with the head of an eagle, wings like a basilisk's and the feet of a leopard. In this guise he appeared in the room where Philip was sitting with all his peers, and with Olympias; he roared loudly and went to embrace Olympias and kiss her; then he turned himself into the shape of a hawk and flew off. Philip and the rest of the bystanders were trembling with fear and asked what the beast was: Olympias replied that it was the god Ammon himself. When Philip heard that, he was very pleased, because he was going to be the father of a child through the grace of the gods.

11. The birth and education of Alexander

When the time came for Olympias to give birth to the marvellous child, she went through great danger. When the child was born, there was a tremendous sound of thunder and wind; the storm came very close and surrounded her so that everyone was terrified,

both great and small. Philip was absolutely delighted, and sent orders to all his lands that the people should make great celebrations because of the birth of his son. The child grew up and prospered, and when he reached the age of four Philip sent for the great teacher Aristotle and handed Alexander over to him to learn his letters. In a few years Alexander had mastered grammar, rhetoric and philosophy, and made such quick progress that the other children in the school were envious and tried to emulate him. One day Alexander said to his mother, 'Mother, I want to learn the astronomy of the Egyptians: let me take lessons with Ektanebos, because I have heard that he is very skilled in astronomy and magic.' Olympias called Ektanebos and entrusted Alexander to him to learn these sciences. So Ektanebos took him as a pupil, and from morning until midday Alexander went for instruction to Aristotle, and from midday to evening he went to the scoundrel Ektanebos. One day Aristotle gathered all the children in his school who were of the same age as Alexander, and divided them into two ranks: in one of them he made Alexander the leader, in the other one Ptolemy. He lined them up against each other, gave each of them a wooden sword and told them to have a battle. After they had begun to fight, Alexander leapt into the middle, trounced them thoroughly and beat them all, and brought them over to his side. Aristotle was amazed when he saw this, and wondered

what lay in store for Alexander. He went and took him by the hand and said, 'Alexander, if you should become king and ruler of the whole world, what favour will you grant me?' Alexander replied, 'Master, if it should turn out as you say and I become the Emperor of the World, I will make you a great man and keep you always by my side.' Aristotle then said, 'All hail, then, Alexander, since you will attain the kingship which will make you ruler of the whole world.'

12. The death of Ektanebos

One day, Ektanebos took Alexander up on to a high tower to show him the planets in heaven. Then Alexander asked him, 'You who know so many things, do you know when you are going to die?' Ektanebos replied, 'I am going to die at the hands of my son.' Alexander said, 'How can a son kill his own father?' Straightaway he threw him down from the tower, saying as he did so 'You have forgotten your own arts, master, since you didn't know that I was going to kill you.' Ektanebos cried out, 'Why did you throw me down, since I am your father and you are my son?' 'How can I be your son,' retorted Alexander, 'since my father is Philip?' Then Ektanebos told him the whole story, how he was his own seed and not that of Philip. When he had finished the story, he expired. When Alexander realised

that this was his father he was very upset at having become a parricide; he took him on his shoulders, carried him back to his house, and wept over him for the whole day. Then he called his mother and asked her, 'Is it true that this is my father, that you received him into your bed, and that he told you he was the god Ammon coming to make love to you, and so made a fool of you?' Olympias admitted the whole story of how she had been deceived by him and become an adulteress. When Alexander had recovered, he laid out the body and buried it with great honours as befitted his master; Philip however knew nothing of what had transpired.

13. The horse Bucephalus

One day news was brought to Philip that a marvellous and beautiful horse had been born far away in his kingdom, with a mark on his right leg in the shape of a bull's head with horns, a cubit long. Immediately the king ordered the horse to be brought, and he marvelled at its beauty and at the mark on it. He ordered his men to put it in a stable some distance away, and no one dared to ride it or to approach it. Alexander visited it often and petted it; the horse liked him, whinnied at him and licked his hand. Philip was in the habit of inviting his peers and their jockeys to

the hippodrome once a week; he would sit and watch as they raced their horses. Alexander went secretly to the stable, saddled Bucephalus and, riding him as he had been taught, went into the hippodrome. When the people saw him they rushed to pay homage to him as the King's Son that he was. Alexander sought out Ptolemy so that they could race together; and so the race began. Alexander shot past Ptolemy like an arrow shot from a bow; everyone was astounded, because Ptolemy was always first in the races. Philip was delighted and amazed at the speed with which he raced, and cried out, 'Heavens, Sun and Moon, today you may know that the sword of Alexander and his Macedonians will overcome the swords of the whole world.' From that time onwards, Philip gave orders that Alexander's age-companions should assemble for practice in weapon-handling, and to learn the skills of war. In fact, they gathered every day and practised archery and javelin-throwing, and Alexander excelled them all in everything.

14. The Olympic Games

When Alexander saw that he had managed to beat all the other boys, he decided to go to the Morea, to the Olympic Games, which the Hellenes used to hold there every five years. Kings, leaders, rulers and men

of every kind used to come to those games from all parts and engage in sports of every kind. Some wrestled naked, others raced on foot, others on horseback or in chariots, others threw weights and there were many other events too. Those who won received great honours and their fame spread far and wide. Alexander wanted to go to discover whether his skill would assist him, and so he sought permission from his father. Philip ordered a warship to be fitted out for him, gilded all over, and so they prepared everything necessary for the journey and provided him with plenty of money for expenses. Alexander left in company with Ptolemy, and after a short time they reached the Eparchy of Gastouni and the place called Pisa, where the Olympic Games took place. In that place there was the marvellous temple of Olympian Zeus. When he arrived he encountered the son of Darius, Nikolaos by name, with many other princes who had come there to compete in the games as well. One day Alexander and Nikolaos came face to face. Alexander greeted Nikolaos, but Nikolaos, because he was puffed up with pride, did not return his greeting. At once Alexander said, 'Truly you are the son of the proud Darius, who calls himself a god; but like him, because of your excessive pride, you are heading for a fall very soon. Tomorrow I shall challenge you to a race, and you will see how you will come down from your proud stance.' Nikolaos promised to meet him the next day for a race.

15. Alexander beats Nikolaos

The next day the two knights came out like two eagles on horseback and began to race. In the first race Alexander rode very craftily so that Nikolaos' horse suffered a fall; Nikolaos fell to the ground as if dead and his saddle fell on top of him. When Alexander saw Nikolaos lying lifeless, he was exultant because he had won. Then the crowd garlanded Alexander and his name was announced on all sides because of his victory. Alexander and his men returned home with great rejoicing.

16. Philip leaves Olympias

When Alexander arrived back in Macedonia, he learnt that Philip had left Olympias and married a new wife; the marriage was being celebrated at that very time. Alexander was outraged and went straight to the palace. Philip received him with joy and placed him beside him at the table. Then Olympias came in to talk to Alexander. 'My son,' she said, 'can you endure to see your mother alive and yet rejected by your father, so that he can marry another?' When Alexander heard this he flared up into a rage, leapt up and seized a stool, with which he killed three of the nobles who were guests at the banquet; the rest ran away and thus escaped death. The

wedding was ruined, and Philip fell ill with grief and shame.

17. The Koumanoi attack Macedonia

When the Koumanoi heard that Philip was ill, they rose up with an army of 150,000 men and marched to the borders of Macedonia. As soon as Philip heard of it, he became very unhappy, called for Alexander, and said, 'My son, take my army and lead it against the enemy who have attacked our land.' Alexander immediately mobilised the troops, of whom there were about 30,000 in Macedonia, and went to meet the enemy. When he found that he was near to where they were encamped, he made a sudden night attack and surprised them. The Koumanoi, seeing the Macedonia attack from a quarter where they had not expected it, were terrified and entered into a great debate about what to do.

18. Alexander's victory over the Koumanoi

In the middle of the night, the Koumanoi fled with all their host. Alexander pursued them and hunted them down. When dawn came, the armies were intermingled, and battle began. The Koumanoi were scattered like sheep when a pack of wolves attacks, and

Alexander chased them for three days and three nights. Forty thousand of the Koumanoi were killed, and two thousand of the Macedonians. Their king, Aplamesis, was killed. Alexander ordered all his commanders and troops to assemble, and addressed them: 'Do you see, my dear friends and companions, how with the power and assistance of God we have defeated the Koumanoi?' Then Alexander returned home to King Philip, leading 10,000 prisoners. He spoke again, to the Koumanoi: 'See, leaders of the Koumanoi, how God has given you into the hands of the Macedonians: your swords were shattered while the swords of the Macedonians were whetted on your flesh, and on that of your king Aplamesis. We have taken your nobles and lords alive. If you wish to preserve your lives and your country, you must agree to become subjects of Macedonia.' How great was the mercy and clemency of Alexander! How he drove and harried the Koumanoi!

19. The Koumanoi pay homage to Alexander

When the Koumanoi had heard Alexander's speech, they replied as follows: 'King Alexander, since God was helping you, and has killed our king Aplamesis, we are your subjects now. Send us a governor of our own from among your leaders, and call us your friends.'

20. New governor for the Koumanoi

Alexander trusted the speeches and the oaths of the Koumanoi, and made his cousin their king: he was his chief huntsman. He gave them suitable gifts and sent them back home to be slaves of Alexander.

21. Anaxarchus' lust for Olympias

Anaxarchus, the king of Pelagonia, heard that Alexander was away from Macedonia with his troops. He devised a wicked deed, as you shall hear: at a certain time Anaxarchus made a journey into Persia and on the way passed through Macedonia. Philip welcomed him and sent him on his way with gifts and honours. But Anaxarchus laid eyes on Olympias: he was pierced to the heart with desire for her, but kept his love secret. Oh ignorance! The wretched man had not heard the saying of Solomon, which runs: 'O man, be polite and restrained in the love of the wife who has fallen to your lot, and do not leer at foreign women, lest you suffer worse than you have done, and lose your life and your property.' Anyway, Anaxarchus assembled an army of 12,000 and led it to Philip's castle, claiming that he had come to offer him assistance; but his real aim was to find an opportunity to steal Olympias.

22. Alexander arrives in Macedonia

Messengers came from Alexander to inform Philip that Alexander had killed the king of the Koumanoi and seized his country, and was returning victorious and laden with spoils as Philip had wished. Philip came out accompanied by Olympias to meet his son. As soon as Anaxarchus saw Olympias outside the place, he seized her and fled. Philip had only a small body of troops, with which he was unable to catch him; so he was severely injured by Anaxarchus.

23. Philip killed Anaxarchus

Alexander arrived just at this moment. He found his father Philip fallen from his horse with a sword in his head, severely wounded. He went ahead and asked after his mother. When he heard about Anaxarchus' crime, he immediately took 800 picked men, caught up with Anaxarchus at the river called Mestos, and captured him alive. He brought him, still breathing, to Philip and addressed his father: 'Rise up and strike your enemy.' Philip stood up weakly and said to Anaxarchus: 'Did you think nothing of my friendship towards you and the gifts I gave you when you were going to Persia? Instead, you have come against me like a devil and committed this crime against me, and

taken my life as well? You too shall taste of the cup you have given me to drink.' Then he placed a foot on his head, drew his sword and executed him.

24. Philip's exhortation to Alexander

As soon as Philip had killed Anaxarchus, he turned to Alexander and said in a loud voice: 'My grief is turned somewhat into joy. Now, my soul, follow your enemy.' Then he exhorted Alexander, 'Make all the heads in the whole world bow down to you, and raise your own hand above the whole world.'

25. The death of Philip

With these words Philip died. The lords of Macedonia who were standing by cried out, 'Long live Alexander!' Olympias stood by and wept for Philip, in a regal and dignified manner. They put him on a bier of solid gold and carried him to the castle amid great lamentation; so they buried him, and he returned to his mother earth, from whom he was born.

26. How Alexander was acclaimed emperor

Then Alexander the son of Philip was acclaimed emperor, and he decided to send instructions to the cities

that everyone should gather in Philippi: so everyone came, Macedonians, Pelagonians, Helladites.

27. Alexander's speech to the lords

Alexander said: 'My dear brothers and companions, magnates and lords of Macedonia, and all of you, today I become king and emperor of the kingdom. My father crowned me king. If you will, please hear what we have decided to do.'

28. The lords' reply to Alexander

The first of the lords to rise was the most intelligent of them all, Philones, who said, 'King Alexander, the young men should all accompany the king, and the old men should not be absent from his council.'

29. Alexander's reply to the magnates

Alexander said: 'The old men are held in honour with us, as too are the younger ones.' At once the eminent Leukouses leapt up and answered him. 'King Alexander, Solomon the Wise said that a kingdom needs many men and armies, but that a king needs honest and

worthy counselors in order to bring the whole army into harmony and agreement.'

30. Advice of the magnates to Alexander

Then the eminent Antiochus got up and spoke: 'The old men must remain in the king's council and must never leave his side; but the young must go to war because they have the strength and vigour of youth; and when they get old, they must rest.' Then Antigon got up and said: 'King Alexander, we must immediately move against the neighbouring kings and compel them to recognise our power, so that they don't try to attack us.' These were the four pieces of advice given by his friends to Alexander. Last of all the warden of the treasury, Ptolemy, said, 'My advice, your majesty, is that we should set out with our army and our bright chariots, and should paint our shields with your emblem, so that everyone will know what king's army it is, and our neighbours will not think complacently that we have all died along with Philip.'

31. Alexander accepts the advice

Alexander was pleased with these counsels and sent out an order throughout the kingdom that all the

bronze-workers should assemble in Philippi. He ordered them all to make 'mail coats' or iron undershirts, and helmets, and to paint on the shields the head of a lion, and on the helmets to place a combination of the horns of the basilisk and the crest of an asp. He ordered the workmen to arm 400 men per day, not including the 'golden spur' troops, and to make armour for the horses out of crocodile hides, with gilded mail. In this way Alexander prepared for his expedition.

32. Darius' letter to Macedonia

But when Darius the king of Persia learnt that Philip was dead, he sent an envoy with a letter to Macedonia, as follows: 'Darius the king, the equal of all the gods on earth and ruler of the inhabited world, who shines like the sun, to those whom it may concern in Macedonia. I have learned that king Philip is dead and has made a small child the king, who is not fit to rule in respect either of his age or his intellect. I am very distressed at Philip's death and at the unworthiness of his son to inherit the kingdom. Therefore I have taken pity on you and have sent you a good and wise ruler, my friend Kantarkouses, to put your country in order. You will pay homage to him as to a replica of myself, and when the time comes for campaign you will advance with your whole army and bring me

tribute, that is to say poll-tax, and will send me the son of Philip as soon as possible, with all his emblems of kingship, since there are a number of other kings' sons also residing here as pages to me, to the number of 40. If I see that the boy is intelligent, in a little while I will make him king and send him back as your ruler.'

33. Kantarkouses delivers the letter

Kantarkouses came to Macedonia and brought the letter, which was a chrysobull. The lords brought him to the voivode Ptolemy, and he in turn led him to the castle in Philippi to meet Alexander. The eminent Antiochus placed Alexander's helmet on a lance, went to meet Kantarkouses and ordered him, 'Pay homage to the lance of Alexander'. Kantarkouses replied, 'If I pay homage to the lance of Alexander, you will not be subject to the hand of king Darius.' 'But if you don't pay homage to the lance of Alexander,' replied Antiochus, 'you will die.' On hearing this, Kantarkouses was afraid and paid homage to the lance of Alexander. They took him into the palace, where Alexander was seated on the royal throne, adorned with gold and precious stones. Kantarkouses made obeisance to Alexander and handed over the letter, marveling at the beauty of Alexander's features. Alexander had on

his head a great crown decorated with large pearls and interwoven with myrtle leaves.

34. Alexander reads the letter

When Alexander heard what Darius had written he was very angry and replied to the envoy: 'Darius must not look at the head and make plans with his feet. Macedonia is not the sort of head he thinks it is.' Immediately he made up his mind and sent a letter in reply, as follows.

35. Alexander's letter to Darius

'Alexander the king of the Macedonians, the son of Philip and Queen Olympias, to Darius king of Persia. We have read your letter, and we thank you for taking pity on us and sending us a fine ruler. You order us to come and be your slaves. But a babe who is sucking his mother's breast is not going to deign to serve you. Wait a few years, and I will come to your kingdom accompanied by the household cavalry of Macedonia; then you will see what sort of child I am.' He sent Kantarkouses back with this letter and presented him with a Macedonian set of armour and a helmet bearing the name of Alexander, with the words, 'When I come

with my army to fight you, wear this armour, so that Macedonians do not kill you.'

36. Darius reads the letter

The envoy returned and gave the letter to Darius. Darius ordered him to read it, and then burst out laughing. Kantarkouses reproved him and said 'It is not right that you should laugh when such a letter is sent to your royal eminence. I saw that Alexander is young in years, while his troops are very handsome and also venerable. If a man's tooth hurts, he must pull it out so that he does not suffer. Likewise, the cypress tree must be uprooted when it is small, for when it is grown, no one can budge it. So make up your mind now to uproot him completely from Macedonia; for if you let him grow up, it will be beyond your powers.'

37. Darius mocks Alexander

Darius was not persuaded by Kantarkouses' remarks. Instead he sent his friend Kletevouses to see Alexander and find out what his ideas and his intelligence were like. He sent him a wooden hoop, and a stick to make it spin, two fine chests and two bags of mustard seeds, and the following letter.

38. Darius' letter to Alexander

‘Darius the king of kings, and god of Persia, to my child Alexander, greetings. It seems that you were in some way displeased at my first letter, in which I told you to be my page until you were of mature intelligence. Therefore I have sent you a plaything, and a stick to make it spin when you play with it, and two fine chests and two sacks of mustard seeds. You may fill the chests with three years’ tribute, and when you can count the mustard seeds you will know how many troops I have. Send me your tribute and your army to serve me, as your father did before you; if you do not, I will bring you bound before me and you will receive no further mercy from me.’

39. Alexander's anger at Darius

Kletevouses brought the letter to Alexander and made obeisance to him. He brought the chests and the mustard seeds and the wooden hoop and placed them before him. When Kletevouses saw the palace he was very impressed. When the letter was read out Alexander seized him by the hair and shouted: ‘This crazy and arrogant Darius calls himself a god, but he will be brought down like a man. While he exalts himself to heaven, he is going to be plunged into hell.’

He smashed the boxes, chewed up the mustard seeds, and devised a reply to Darius.

40. Alexander's letter to Darius

‘Alexander the king of the Macedonians, to Darius the king of Persia, greetings. You have done me great honour and a great compliment in sending me a hoop to play with. You are very proud, but later you will suffer a fall. You have sent me a fine omen; for just as the hoop goes round, so I shall encircle the whole world and will make myself master even of your kingdom. And as I chewed up the mustard seeds and spat them out, so I shall crush your armies with the help of Heaven and the God of Sabaoth. I accept the chests as a great gift, symbolising the castles I shall capture. I tell you, let the East be sufficient for you to shelter your armies: keep away from the West.’

41. Kletevouses returns to Darius

He gave the letter to Kletevouses and sent him back with a gift for Darius, a measure of peppercorns. Before he left, Alexander explained to Kletevouses: ‘You saw how I chewed up the mustard seeds and spat them out before you; now my power will be like pepper compared with your power. Let Darius see how many

mustard seeds he needs to counteract one peppercorn; so will my armies be: he'll see!'

42. Alexander gathers his army

Alexander gave orders for his army to assemble at Philippi. When they had all come together, there were 500,000 armed men. He despatched 300,000 of them to guard Macedonia, and took with him 200,000 to attack King Archidonouses of Thessalonike. When the latter heard that Alexander was coming, he knew he would be unable to withstand him, and sent an envoy with a quantity of gold, 100 picked horses from his stables, a chariot plated with gold, and his son, Polykartouses.

43. Archidonouses' letter to Alexander

'Archidonouses the king of Thessalonike to Alexander the most glorious and wise king of Macedonia. It is with great joy, and with gifts and warm greetings of the most genuine kind to your kingdom, that I send you this valuable treasure. Because of my great respect for you I send you my son Polykartouses to serve in your palace, accompanied with the kind of valuable gifts that our kingdom offers. God has given you the grace to become emperor of the whole world.

I pay homage to you and place my entire kingdom under your command, and will send you whatever you require from my army and my treasury. If we have sent few gifts, receive them as if they were many, and if you command me too to come to your kingdom, I will be very pleased to come.'

44. How Alexander received the gifts

Alexander accepted the gifts and was delighted when he read the letter, and thanked the sender warmly. He took Polykartouses and embraced him warmly, with the words, 'Because of the love of your father you will be my beloved brother.' Then he dictated a letter to the king of Thessalonike.

45. Alexander's letter to Archidonouses

'Alexander the king of Macedonia to Archidonouses the king of Thessalonike. We send you greetings and thank you for the letter you sent us, not because of the gifts which you sent to accompany your son, but because of your kind words and because of the love with which you have received us. The head that bows is not cut off by the sharp sword. Your son may remain with me as if he were my brother, while you may remain peacefully in your kingdom, and honour us.

Every year you shall send us 80 talents of treasure, and in addition send us 12,000 auxiliary troops.'

46. How Archidonouses sent him an army, and Alexander marched to Athens

Archidonouses saw the latter and bowed before it. Immediately he sent 12,000 troops as auxiliaries to Alexander. Alexander left Thessalonike and went to Athens. This was a great city with every kind of fortification, which had no equal in the whole world: it was ruled by 12 orators, the wisest men among the Greeks. There were many schools there, and all the intellectuals of Greece, who ruled the Greeks with justice.

47. Council of the Athenian philosophers

When the philosophers heard that Alexander was marching against them, they called a council and decided not to receive him. However, Sophonias, the Philosopher of all Philosophers, stood up and said, 'We must not fight against Alexander. He has killed the Koumanoi, the Alamannoi and King Anaxarchus, and has captured their countries; Archidonouses the king of Thessalonike has paid him loving homage and made peace with his kingdom. So I say we should

be friendly, otherwise he will destroy our fortress.’ Antisthenes the philosopher replied as follows: ‘Since the foundation of Athens, no foreign king has ever ruled it. Darius the king of Persia came and besieged it, and made war against it, but he was unable to subdue it so he soon went away with his tail between his legs. Another Persian king, Xerxes, came to Athens with a great army, but he too was unable to subdue it, and went away defeated by the Athenians, and then he and his army were nearly drowned in a river in Macedonia. Given that our strength is so great, we must not bow before the son of Philip.’ Diogenes the philosopher was next: ‘Three years ago I went to the island of Olympias and saw Alexander in his gymnasium, wrestling with staves and showing his agility; he threw all the knights, so that the lords all praised him and made him chief knight over all of them. Also in the gymnasium was Ouranios the philosopher of Olympias: when he saw Alexander he said to the rulers “I see a sure sign in the son of Philip that he is going to rule the whole world;” and the philosopher called him to be brought to the castle so that they could pay homage to him. So it seems to me, O men of Athens, that I should advise you not to stand against Alexander in battle, because he is so powerful and brave. It is true that he is only young, but he has won a great name in the world already, and he has a large army of brave men. So, it seems to me better that we should receive him with honours and gifts, since he will bring good customs

into our country, and then he will set off from here to attack Rome.'

48. The Athenians reject Alexander

The Athenians were not convinced by Diogenes' speech, and they just flung insults and opprobrium at him: 'Every wise man has a streak of madness in him.' The philosopher was very upset at the way they abused him in public. He left Athens that instant, went to Alexander, paid homage to him and revealed the opinions of the Athenians. Alexander immediately mobilised his army in full strength and set off to war with the Athenians. He camped close to Athens, and ordered a great and noble leading man from Alamannia, Arphadios by name, to go to them as his ambassador. He did not know how to speak Greek and the Athenians had difficulty in finding a man to interpret for him. Anyway, Arphadios said to the Athenians: 'Alexander orders you to give him treasure and an army, and to make loving obeisance to him; if you do not obey his orders he will destroy your whole city, your army will be slaughtered by the swords of the Macedonians, and you will be put on trial.' (What foolishness and bad counsel the Athenians had displayed!) When the leaders of the Athenians heard this, they made a mocking reply; their words to the ambassador were so rude and arrogant that he was ashamed to listen to them. 'Creep

back to Alexander and tell him that Athens will not pay homage to him. Let him be informed that other, better kings than he have come to Athens, and we did not pay homage to them, because in all the world there are no better philosophers, and no better knights, than ours. Let Macedonia be enough for him to rule; let him leave our country forthwith, even if he does not want to.' Then they killed the interpreter in front of the ambassador, so that no one else would be able to come and give them orders, and threw him out.

49. Alexander is angry at the Athenians

The ambassador returned to Alexander and told him everything the Athenians had said. When he heard that, Alexander was very angry, drew up his troops and marched to war. For four days he laid siege to the city. The Koumanoi from Alamannia bombarded it with arrows like a swarm of bees, so that the defenders in the castle could not see out. They did not like being shut up in the city, so they opened their gates and marched out.

50. Athenian victory

The Athenians killed 10,000 of the Koumanoi and 3,000 of the Macedonians, while only 10 of the

Athenians were killed. They threw fire from the castle and nearly burnt Alexander himself. Such was the bravery of the Athenians.

51. Speeches and council of Alexander

When night fell, Alexander went to the place where he was camped, dismissed his whole army and retired to his tent. Then he summoned the chiefs to deliberate what they should do about the Athenians. Alexander said, 'Most noble and brave leaders, we failed to break into the Athenian camp, and to take their city; so now what do you think we should do?' The philosopher Diogenes, who had fled from Athens, replied, 'King Alexander, I knew that Athens would not be captured easily, since it has a large population, about 10,000 warriors. Use some stratagem to deceive them into coming out to battle; then we shall be able to put them to flight. They will pursue us as soon as we move away from the castle, and then we can turn on them with our fine cavalry: so we shall be able to kill them and capture the castle. When Alexander heard this suggestion, like the one that the Greeks had played against the Trojans, he immediately gathered all his troops and retreated. Then he drove into the camp 1,000 cattle and 4,000 sheep. He composed a letter and left it in his tent, as follows.

52. Alexander's letter to the Athenians

‘Leaders of the Athenians, I was not aware of the power of your god when I came down on you with the forces that you saw. Your god Apollo became angry, gave you strength and had my army destroyed by you. See now, I am abandoning your castle and retreating from your land. Please take the flocks I have left behind and sacrifice them to your god Apollo so that he will have mercy on me.’ Then he retreated 12 miles from the castle and hid in a thicket.

53. The Athenians read the letter

The Athenians came out of their castle and entered the tents where Alexander had pitched camp. When they found and read the letter, they said, ‘The son of Philip is frightened and has run away.’ So they all emerged, both small and great, and set off in pursuit of Alexander.

54. Tiromachos' dream

One of the leaders, named Tiromachos, had a dream. He went to the leaders and said, ‘Men and commanders of Athens, hold on, don't pursue Alexander, because I saw a dismal dream last night. I saw the temple of Apollo collapse, the towers of the castle tumble down

and the marble gates shatter: Alexander rode in on horseback and pranced through the streets. The castle was groaning with stores of wheat, ripe and unripe, and his soldiers harvested it.'

55. The Athenians fight Alexander

This was Tiromachos' dream, but when they had heard his account they did not listen to his advice to stay put, but set off in pursuit of Alexander. Alexander ambushed them in the grove of Castalia: he divided his troops into three parts, each with its own disposition. The Athenians caught up with Alexander in the plain of Vatalia. Immediately Alexander gave the order for the trumpets and drums to sound, and the troops rushed out from their hiding places in the thicket. The Athenians were frightened when they saw Alexander's army and cried out, 'What a disaster! Not one of us will escape today.' Trembling with fear, they advanced to battle. Alexander charged first and fired at the Athenians. They hacked and chopped like farmers clearing a dense field. Some of the Athenians fled and joined Alexander's troops for the march into the castle. What suffering and lamentation there was to be seen in Athens that day! The women came out to help their husbands, and were slaughtered themselves. The blood ran through the streets like rivers, and the cries of men and women ascended to the heavens.

56. Alexander pardons the Athenians

Alexander mounted Bucephalus and rode into the middle of the city, calling on his troops not to cut down the defenders; but he was unable to calm their ferocity. The women and children stood crying and begged Alexander to take pity on them and stop the slaughter. But Alexander was unable to halt the men from their frenzy and ordered them to throw fire into the castle. The women and children ran to the towers to escape, but they were engulfed by the flames and killed. Others ran to the temple of Apollo to escape, but they burnt that down too, with all the gods of the Greeks. Then Alexander laughed and said, 'If the gods of the Greeks were real gods, they would have overcome the fire and would not have been burned up.' But he took pity on the people, and said, 'Today the weapons of the Macedonians were reddened with the blood of the Athenians, but the blame is not mine, but theirs for their folly.'

57. Lament of the Athenians

Then Diogenes the philosopher pronounced this moral: 'If a man does not suffer, he does not learn his lessons well. The saying goes, Burn the head of your enemy and he will learn to fear you. This is what I told them would happen, and they took no notice of me.' Then Athens and Thebes broke into laments,

while the kingdoms of the west, Sicily and Lacedaemonia, trembled and began to be afraid and to debate earnestly what to do.

58. The Romans pay homage to Alexander

Then King Alexander crossed to Rome; he counted up his army and found there were 400,000 armed men. As he approached Rome the kings and lords of Lacedaemonia came to meet him, along with those of Sicily and Apulia, of Riace and Golthi. They brought with them rich gifts, and troops, and 12 years' tribute. They also brought him a royal crown with many precious stones. In short, all the kings of the west paid homage to him, and he rewarded them with honours. As Alexander approached Rome, the rulers heard that he was coming, and they summoned a council to decide what to do. When they heard about the sack of Athens they were dismayed and frightened. The philosophers and orators said 'Let us receive Alexander peacefully; then we shall be able to do what we want with him and get what we ask for, so long as we welcome him with suitable gifts.'

59. Roman supplication to Alexander

The Romans got together and went to the temple of Apollo so that he could reveal to them what they should

do. Apollo appeared in their dreams while they were sleeping and said, 'You must know, men of Rome, that Alexander is my son, because I once went to Macedonia and Alexander was conceived. So you must pay homage to him properly and offer him gifts.' The rulers assembled to meet Alexander, and their delegation was extremely splendid.

60. The Roman delegation to Alexander

It included 4,000 young men of princely family and 2,000 beautiful girls. The princes, wearing gold crowns on their heads, rode on beautiful horses, and the girls were likewise on horseback, shaded with golden veils. In addition there were 40,000 men carrying branches of bay, in golden robes, as well as priests, accompanied by 1,000 nobles with burning lamps, and the Priest of the god of the Hellenes, accompanied by 2,000 elders all with lighted lanterns. That was the delegation that went out to meet Alexander.

61. The Romans' gifts to Alexander

The Romans went out to Alexander carrying rich and royal gifts, preeminent among them the robe

of Solomon, which King Nebuchadnezzar had taken from Jerusalem; twelve flasks studded with precious stones, which Solomon had kept in Holy Sion, in the Holy of Holies; the crown of Solomon, with three precious gems which shone in the night like lanterns; twelve entire gems on which the months of the year were engraved; the crown of Queen Sibylla, which was made with such art as no eye had ever seen; a white horse with harness of crocodile skin and saddle encrusted with gems; the royal chariot of Priam which he had taken from Troy; several carved ivory poles including the lance of King Tarquin of Rome, which was covered with a shield of hide. Such was the splendour of the Roman delegation to Alexander.

62. Alexander approaches Rome

Then Alexander drew up his troops in good and elegant order, and they came close up to him. He himself rode Bucephalus, and placed on his head the crown of Cleopatra the queen of Egypt, which contained 12 valuable gems. When they reached Rome and met the leaders, he ordered the horsemen to line up before him. The trumpets were sounded on both sides, and all kinds of instruments; he divided the army into 12 parts, each to follow its own disposition.

63. The Romans pay homage to Alexander

The chief knights of the Romans came out and met them and paid homage to Alexander, saying with one voice, 'Long live Alexander, the son of Philip and Queen Olympias.' The girls came and paid homage, blessed him and moved aside. The princes, the old men and the soldiers all did the same, in turn. Last came the priests with lamps and incense; they censured Alexander and wished him long life too.

64. Alexander enters Rome

Alexander went with his retinue into the citadel of Rome and went straight to the temple of the great God Apollo. Alexander paid homage to the god, and the priest of the Hellenes offered myrrh, frankincense and other royal gifts. He placed a book in Alexander's hands, in which was written as follows.

65. The Oracle from the Book of the Hellenes

'In the five thousandth year will come a one-horned goat who will drive out all the leopards of the West who are at war with each other. He will march to the South and to the East, and will discover the wondrous Ram with spreading horns, one of which points to the

South and the other to the North. The one-horned goat will smite the wondrous Ram in the heart and kill it. Following this, all the kings of the East will tremble, and the swords of all Persia will be burnt. He himself will go to Rome the Great, and will be acclaimed by everyone as King of the whole world.'

66. Interpretation of the Oracle

Alexander gave the book to the philosophers, who read what was written in it and said, 'King Alexander, we have seen in the vision of the prophet Daniel that he calls the kingdoms of the West leopards, those of the South lions, those of the East the two-horned Ram, meaning by that the Medes and the Persians. The one-horned Goat is the kingdom of the Macedonians. It seems to us that the dusty swords, which he says will come to Rome, refer to you yourself, King Alexander.'

67. Alexander's pleasure at the Oracle

When Alexander heard these words he was very pleased and said, 'It will fall out as God wills.' The Macedonian troops also rejoiced, as well as the leaders of Rome; all the kings of the West came and paid homage to Alexander. They brought him many gifts,

and asked him to introduce good laws in their countries also. Alexander took pity on them and sent them good instructions as they asked. They brought him 12 years' tribute, and troops, paid homage to him and went away. He installed as ruler of Rome a friend of his named Talamedos.

68. Alexander fights strange beasts

Alexander ordered all the kings of the West to obey Talamedos. He took much gold and troops from them and returned towards the South. There he found powerful kings, whom he fought and took much booty. He went as far as the Ocean, which runs around the world, and entered into desert places, where he found marvellous beasts: their faces were human but they had two heads and feet like shields. He fought and conquered them because the beasts had no armour, and fell quickly. Then he went on to a mountain of rocks as hard as iron; women came out of it to attack Alexander and fought a bitter battle with his army, in which they killed 100,000 of his soldiers on that very day. These women had wings like eagles and fingernails like scythes. They were very strong, and flew about over the army, striking the soldiers in their faces. When Alexander saw what was going on, he ordered fires to be set in the reeds – for the place was full of reeds. When the women flew over the fires,

their wings were burnt and they fell on top of the soldiers, who killed them, to the number of 20,000. Then Alexander marched on to Ocean and changed direction to head for England, where he ordered his army to rest.

69. Alexander's sea voyage

Alexander ordered the rulers of England to build him 12,000 hollow vessels. Each vessel would hold 1,000 armed men with their supplies. He ordered the cavalry to travel on dry land to Barbary, making Philon and Ptolemy commanders of the army. They agreed to meet in Egypt. He told them, 'Wherever you arrive at a castle, take troops and tribute from it.' Alexander himself went to Konis and launched the whole fleet into the sea. A favourable wind sprang up and they sailed towards the East. He made Antiochos commander of 3,000 vessels, Seleukios of another 3,000, and Byzantios of another 3,000, while he himself commanded the final 3,000; so they set off in four divisions.

70. Alexander reaches Egypt

They sailed for 30 days and 30 nights, and then Alexander reached Egypt where the River of Gold

flows. He ordered them to build a castle, and they called it Alexandria. Seleukios the voivode arrived with his fleet in Cilicia, where he built a castle and named it Seleukeia. Antiochos, the supreme voivode, came to the castle of the Black Sea in Thrace, and named it Antiocheia. Byzantios, the great captain, came to the narrows of the sea at the strait of Scutari and built a fortified city, to which he gave his own name, Byzantion.

71. The voivodes join Alexander in Alexandria

When Alexander reached Alexandria, he was very distressed at the absence of his voivodes and the slowness of their fleets; he could not understand why they were taking so long to arrive. Eventually Antiochos and his fleet arrived, one day about midday, and he explained to Alexander how they had founded a city at Antiocheia. Next came Seleukios, and told how he had founded Seleukeia. On the third day the great Captain Byzas arrived, and recounted how he too had founded a city, Byzantion, in a very beautiful spot. Alexander was very happy when they were all reunited. When they had all arrived they went on and founded another city and called it One Heart; they stayed there six months, waiting for the cavalry to arrive.

72. Messengers come to Alexander

Messengers came to Alexander and announced, 'Ptolemy and Philon will be here by evening.' They duly arrived that evening and kissed Alexander's hand. They started to tell of their adventures and the battles they had fought in the lands of Barbary and in Ethiopia, and how they had defeated and captured the barbarians and brought them, bound, to Alexandria. As soon as Alexander saw them, he administered a terrible oath. They swore all to be loyal to him when they returned home to their lands; and so he released them. (What a wise decision by Alexander!) He gave them many gifts and they went to their lands and ordered their peoples to pay him tribute.

73. Alexander visits various places

Then Alexander and his army went to Asia. There they built a castle and named it Tripolis. From there they went to Phrygia, on the borders of the Troad; they entered Troy on the side where the Hellenes had broken down the wall when they fought there for nine years and destroyed the city because of the love of a woman, Helen by name, the wife of a king of the Morea called Menelaos. King Priam was at that time king of Phrygia and Troy and had a son called Paris,

or Alexander. This Paris had gone to Lacedaimonia to worship Apollo, the terrible god, and when he saw the beauty of Helen he seized her immediately and brought her to Troy. His father Priam was distressed at this rape of Helen, and cursed him, as did the rest of the Trojans: he did not receive him kindly. When King Menelaos discovered that his wife Helen had been stolen, he cursed Paris, gathered together the kings of Greece to help him, went to Troy and pillaged and destroyed it. All the warriors of Troy were slain at this time, and likewise those of Greece. Helen was praised for not wishing to become another man's wife, and saying, 'Better death with honour than life with dishonour.'

74. Alexander enters Troy

When Alexander marched into Troy, the princes bowed down before him, and placed the crown of their queen before him, and then laid it on his head. It shone like the sun and gleamed at night like a lamp, because of the many precious stones it contained. They also gave him the shield of mighty Hector, adorned with valuable gems and gilding. They also brought the book of Homer, which contained the whole story of the war and destruction at Troy, from the beginning to the end. Alexander began to read of the wars of the heroes; he was sad, but then became cheerful, and said, 'How many brave heroes were destroyed because

of one woman!’ Then he asked the princes, ‘Where are the monuments of the heroes?’ The princes took him to see them, and Alexander honoured them and anointed them with myrrh and frankincense, saying sorrowfully, ‘O my great heroes, Achilles and Hector, if I had found you alive, I should have honoured you with many gifts, and should have delighted the world with you; but seeing that I find you dead, how shall I honour you, what can I give you? There is no gift for the dead other than myrrh and frankincense. May the gods reward you for the deeds of bravery you performed, as Homer describes.’

75. Alexander goes to Macedonia

Then Alexander assembled all his forces and the kings he had taken by the sword in the West, and set off for Macedonia. They crossed the city and arrived in the land of Macedonia. It was three years since he had left there on his expedition.

76. Messengers to Olympias

Messengers went ahead to his mother Olympias to tell her that Alexander was approaching. Immediately the queen mounted her horse, along with his teacher Aristotle and all the lords of the land, and accompanied

by a great crowd: they met him at the River Kasandra. They paid homage to him with great ceremony and presented him with many gifts; then they put him up in the castle of Philip.

77. Alexander's orders to his troops

Then Alexander granted his troops leave, saying, 'Go to your houses and relax for six months. Feed up your horses and polish your armour; when my order comes, be ready to go on an expedition.' So they all went home to recuperate; when the six months were up, they returned. When the troops were assembled, there were found to be 100,000 armed men, all of them selected and armed with iron weapons to be close to Alexander. He sent his mother Olympias and his teacher Aristotle to the land of Macedonia with 50,000 troops. All the Macedonians wore the same uniform, their body armour adorned with the horns of the basilisk, their spears and helmets with lions' manes on the crests, while the surfaces of their shields were woven from crocodile skins. He ordered them to pitch their tents all around his own. No other soldier would dare to face the Macedonians. He selected 2,000 beautiful women to travel with the army, all in a body, and he placed a Commander of the Companions in charge of the women. When one of the soldiers was in need of a woman he would go to the Commander,

give him a golden florin and take one of the women. The Commander took one florin for every night he spent with her. All the troops were kept in strict order. The 100,000 Macedonians were always beside him, and received many favours from Alexander. He spoke with them every day: he was smaller than any of them. They operated as one man when they were instructed.

Ptolemy the great voivode and general in chief was head of the army – a good, likeable and just man, ready for any undertaking. When any of the Macedonians was killed, he put another, finer man in his place, so that there was always a total of 100,000 men.

78. Alexander sets off for the East

Alexander took his troops and went towards the East. All the rulers who paid him homage received honours and kindness from Alexander, but all those who opposed him were killed by him, and their land enslaved. The whole world heard the news of him; the kings of Asia trembled, and so did those of Palestine.

79. Report to Darius about Alexander

Everyone ran to Darius, who at that time was king of Egypt, and told him that Alexander and

his army were coming to Asia. When Darius heard this, he immediately sent an envoy with a letter, as follows.

80. Darius' Letter to Alexander

'Darius, the King of Kings, higher than the whole universe, equal to the gods and more luminous than the Sun, whose boundaries reach to the edges of the Earth, from East to West and into all regions – it has come to my ears, son of Philip, that you are heading for these parts. You were ruler of Greece, you marched as far as Rome and you completely overthrew all the kingdoms of the West along with their rulers; you travelled to the Ocean and the lands of Barbary, and captured all the regions of Ethiopia. Now they are part of your dominion, and they pay tribute to you. Now I discover that this is not enough for you, but you have come into Asia, close to my lands, treading it down with your Macedonian bandits, my slaves and my subjects. Your father Philip was my servant, and brought me tribute every year; but now you want to trample over my own lands. Now, if you wish to come and pay homage to me here in Persia (which I trust is what you intend), I will allow you to hold your own paternal kingdom, and I will remit the tribute which your father used to pay to me, as a charitable gift. But if you do not like my suggestion, I will come against you with all my

armies, and the entire world will not be large enough to protect you from me.'

81. How Alexander was angry at Darius' words and threatened to kill the emissaries

Alexander was extremely angry at Darius' letter. He decided to hang the emissaries, but they cried out in a loud voice, saying: 'King Alexander, what have we poor men done wrong? Give us the order and we will go.' The chiefs of the Macedonians approached and they too said: 'King Alexander, it is not right to kill messengers.' Alexander said: 'Darius did not send them as to a king, but as to a bandit and robber. However, in the name of God who is great, I allow them to go free.' Turning to the emissaries, he said: 'Do not criticize me for this, but blame your own lord, because I hold him to be a king, while he takes me for a bandit and murderer. When he sent me such a letter, he effectively cut off your heads. However, see, I graciously make you a present of your lives.' They paid homage to Alexander and said: 'If you kill us, you will do no harm to Darius. But because you have granted us our lives, we shall go and speak well of you, and praise your name before all the lords of Persia, even Darius.' When Alexander heard this speech, he ordered his scribes to compose a letter to Darius, as follows.

82. Alexander's letter to Darius

‘Alexander the King of Kings, by the grace of the Most High, to Darius the king of Persia. I have received your letter, in which you wrote nothing that was kingly, as befitted your dignity, but merely things that are unseemly and overweening, and do not suit you. You say that I have captured the kingdoms of the West and destroyed them. So you may learn, how every man may rise from the depths to the heights; so having taken the West, I am coming to the East. You try to scare me by saying that there is none who can withstand you, and you assert that I am coming with my Macedonians alone, whom you call thieves and bandits. Do not be so bold as to make war against me, or you will surely lose your life. Pay homage to me, and you will be able to retain your Persian kingdom.’

83. How Darius received Alexander's letter

When Darius saw Alexander's letter, he was very angry. He told his emissaries to find out how old Alexander was, what his information was, and how big his army might be. The emissaries replied: ‘He is about 30 years old, he is handsome, brave and charming; in his speech he is firm and truthful. He understood your mind from your letter, O king; and the army which

he has amounts to 500,000 men. We tell your majesty simply what we saw.'

84. Darius assembles his army

Darius thought about what they had said, and replied: 'What you say, that he has the marks of kingship, seems to me untrue.' Immediately he gave orders to mass all his troops on the River Pyrgopoiia (Tower-builder), where God had divided the languages of the whole world. He wrote to Jerusalem and to Egypt, ordering them not to allow Alexander, with his lesser forces, to free them from his control. Alexander however advanced into Judaea, to the outskirts of the noble city of Jerusalem, where Jeremiah the prophet was at this time the High Priest, and he wrote the following letter to the people of the Jews.

85. Alexander's letter to the Jews

'Alexander the King of Kings by grace of the Most High, to those who dwell in Jerusalem, where you worship one God of Heaven and Earth, the Almighty God Sabaoth—hearty greetings. As soon as you receive my letter, pay homage to me and come out to meet me, since I am going to liberate you by the power of the Almighty Sabaoth from the hands of the idolaters.

Do not disobey me, and I will impose good laws on your country, as you would wish.'

When the lords of Jerusalem read the letter, they paid homage and wrote a letter themselves to Alexander, as follows.

86. The Jews' reply

'King Alexander, we have received your letter, and have paid homage to you. Let it be known to your majesty that we are worshippers of the God Sabaoth, who freed us from slavery in Egypt. We crossed the Red Sea, and came and settled here, and now because of our sins he has thrown us into the hands of Darius. If we acknowledge you against his will, he will come and enslave us all. Attack Darius, and if you win, we shall be your servants. Come now, enter Jerusalem, and we shall praise you as king of the whole world.'

87. Alexander's second letter to Jerusalem

'King Alexander, servant of Almighty God, to all the people of Jerusalem. I said that you were not the sort of men to overrate Darius, since you worship the Almighty God Sabaoth. Because you are servants of idolaters, and are not my own servants, where shall we worship the One God? I shall not march against

Darius now, but I shall come here to you, and you must do what you think best.'

88. Jeremiah's speech

When Jeremiah saw Alexander's second letter, he said: 'Rulers of Jerusalem, let us receive Alexander when he comes to Jerusalem, because I saw in a dream the Prophet Daniel, telling me that he is coming to liberate us from the hands of Darius.' This speech was approved by all the people of Jerusalem.

89. Alexander's dream

Alexander saw in a dream the prophet Jeremiah, dressed in his priestly robes and telling him: 'Come, Alexander my son, march into Jerusalem, to Holy Sion, bow down to the God of Heaven and Earth, and from here you will march against Darius and defeat him with your army.'

90. Alexander approaches Jerusalem

Alexander woke from his dream and went directly to Jerusalem. When the prophet Jeremiah heard that

Alexander was coming, he ordered everyone to gather together, great and small, to welcome Alexander. The prophet put on his high priestly robes, and 1,000 priests in their robes and carrying golden thuribles, as well as 10,000 men with lighted lamps, went out to meet him and pay homage. When Alexander saw the prophet in the lead, he said: 'Lords, this is like the man I saw in my dream;' and he dismounted and paid him homage. The prophet anointed him with myrrh and frankincense, as a true king, took him by the hand and led him into Jerusalem.

91. Alexander enters Jerusalem

Then Alexander went in and worshipped the Holy Sion. The chief men explained to him that Solomon the wise king had built it, and he asked them what god it belonged to. The prophet told him: 'We worship one God, who made Heaven and Earth.' When Alexander heard that, he said: 'Truly you are servants of the Most High God, and I bow down to him. I make a present to you of your gifts and of the tribute I was going to take from you. May God be with you always and help you in whatever you undertake.' Jeremiah the prophet brought all the leaders, and a great many gifts, and paid homage to Alexander; but he was unwilling to accept them. 'Let them be given to the God of Sabaoth,' he said.

He left Jerusalem and headed for Egypt. Jeremiah the prophet came up to him one afternoon and said: 'The prophet Daniel prophesied that you would come to Jerusalem to bow down to the God of Heaven and Earth.'

92. Jeremiah's advice to Alexander

'I advise you to worship him and call on him day and night to be your helper, so that you may destroy the power of the Persians. When you go into Egypt, you will become master of it, you will kill the king of India, and then you will fall sick. But God will help you, and you will become king of the whole world; you will come to Paradise, and there you will find men and women living on an island, whose food is fruit and vegetables and whose name is the Blessed Ones. They will tell you about your life, and your death. All these things you will see, along with many other things; and my prayers will go with you.'

93. The Jerusalemites' gifts to Alexander

Then Jeremiah the prophet said to Alexander: 'Take nothing from us, and do not leave us in trouble.' Alexander replied: 'I will do as you suggest.' The prophet sent for some precious stones which had the

name of the God of Sabaoth written on them. Joshua the son of Nun had worn them on his head when he went into battle. They also brought the sword of Goliath the Hellene, and the crown of the mighty Sampson, which was decorated with the fangs of snakes, and his lance which had a diamond blade, and the robe of king Saul, which had never been touched by iron. The Hebrews too brought gifts, 1,000 riding horses and 1,000 camels, the most beautiful they could find. They all praised him and paid homage to him as a worthy king. Finally Jeremiah the prophet blessed him and sent him away.

94. How Alexander fell ill in Egypt

Alexander marched to Egypt, and the Egyptians came out to fight him, but they were afraid and turned tail. Alexander surrounded the castle and fought fiercely all that day, but was unable to take it. Near the castle there was a lake of very cold water. Alexander, heated by the sun, went for a swim and caught cold; he became very ill.

95. The cunning of the Egyptians

His army fell into gloom and fear, and discussed the matter. The Egyptians did a treacherous deed and

wrote a letter secretly to Alexander, as follows: ‘King Alexander, do not trust your doctor Philip: he is trying to kill you with herbs, because he is not loyal to you.’ They wrote another letter to the doctor, as follows: ‘Doctor, if you kill Alexander with your herbs, we will make you a lord and you will be a great man in Darius’ kingdom.’ As soon as Philip saw the Egyptians’ letter, he tore it up with a laugh, and wrote them a reply as follows: ‘If I wanted a kingdom, my lord would give me a better one than yours. You are thieves, donkeys and bumpkins, no better than animals, and all the kings of the world are not worth one hair from Alexander’s head. You will find that the trickery by which you make war will rebound on your own heads as you will find out as soon as Alexander is recovered.’ When the Egyptians saw this letter from Philip, they were afraid; so they quickly sent another letter to Alexander, as follows: ‘Do not trust Philip: he will poison you with his herbs.’

96. How Philip gave herbs to Alexander

In that hour Philip brought Alexander a draught of herbs to drink, to cure him. Alexander got up, took the glass from the doctor’s hands, and asked: ‘Will this draught cure me quickly?’ When Philip heard him, he took the glass, drank half its contents and gave it to Alexander. After Alexander had drunk it, he showed

Philip the Egyptians' letter. When Philip read it, he shook his head and sighed, saying, 'If I had destroyed your kingdom, of what king should I be doctor, since your death would make the whole world shake?' Then Philip gave him the letter from the Egyptians that he had torn up, and showed it to Alexander, saying: 'The Egyptians treacherously wrote to your majesty and to me, but God will soon bring it on their own heads, since I am loyal to you, as God knows.' Alexander said: 'You are right, Philip. A doctor does not kill a king, because he must have great trust in him.' Then Alexander slept the whole day; towards evening he got up and had himself brought before the Macedonians; he dined with them, then slept peacefully the whole night.

97. Alexander conquers Egypt

In the morning Alexander armed his troops. They began to fight all around the castle: they hurled stones and fired arrows into it, so that the Egyptians cried out in a loud voice: 'Alexander, king and fellow-countryman, son of Nektanebos, have mercy on us and show compassion before we are all destroyed.' When Alexander heard that, he ordered the assault to cease; he entered the castle and they all paid homage to him. Then he asked, 'Why did you call me the son of Nektanebos,

your own King?’ They replied, ‘Nektanebos, when he left Egypt, sent us a letter, which we have kept safe: it will make everything clear.’

98. Nektanebos’ letter to the Egyptians

‘I cannot withstand Darius, and therefore I am leaving you; but I shall return in 30 years. Set up a pillar in the middle of the city, carve my face on it, place my crown above the portrait; if one should come and stand beneath this pillar, and the crown should descend on his head, pay homage to him, because he is my son.’

99. Alexander becomes king of Egypt

When Alexander heard these words, he went and stood below the pillar. Immediately the crown fell on his head. All the lords of Egypt saw the miracle, and were amazed. Alexander ordered them to erect four tall columns in Egypt. One of them was gilded all over and tall enough to be seen from everywhere in the castle; the other three were made somewhat smaller. On the first he placed his own image, in pure gold; on the second was Ptolemy, on the third Antiochos and on the fourth Philon.

100. Darius advances to the River Euphrates

Alexander ordered them to destroy the city, and he made Philip ruler of the whole of Egypt. He found a great deal of vegetables, and divided them all among his army. At the same time Darius advanced with his army to the Euphrates and sent representatives to Alexander. The sentries caught them and brought them to Alexander; they told him that Darius was coming against him with a great army. At once messengers came to Alexander, telling him that Darius had reached the Euphrates. When Alexander heard that, he ordered a count of his army, and found that he had 600,000 horsemen and 100,000 foot soldiers. Darius had a million cavalry and the same number of infantry. That very day Alexander tortured the representatives of Darius, and they admitted the truth, that Darius had a very large army. Then he quickly went up on to a high mountain and ordered numerous fires to be lit. The people saw the quantity of fires and were amazed. Quickly he released the representatives and told them to convey to Darius that the two kings must fight together: 'but you are not to go to war, since it is the Macedonian custom to leave no man alive.' Then he gave orders to present them with Macedonian armour. He told them: 'if you go to war, go dressed in this armour, so that the Macedonians do not kill you.' The representatives returned to Darius and revealed what they had seen with their own eyes, and praised

Alexander to the skies. When Darius heard that, in his anger he gave orders that the representatives should be killed so that they would not reveal all this to the Persian army and make them frightened. Then he gave orders to have everything prepared for war.

101. Darius sends to Alexander

The Lords of Persia said 'It is not right, O king, that you should fight against Alexander, because he is a bandit, a lesser man than all the kings you have beneath you in your empire.' Darius ordered them to call the great voivode Migas, and said to him, 'Raise an army of 600,000 from the Persians. Set off and, wherever you find Alexander, bring him to me as a prisoner. But if he is afraid and runs away, hunt him down throughout the whole world. Raise 200,000 from the Medes in addition, and another 200,000 from the Ehtiopians, and 100,000 infantry bowmen.' Migas raised the armies as Darius had instructed him, crossed the River Euphrates, and got ready to fight.

102. Alexander's speech

When Alexander saw Migas' army, he gave orders and his whole army mounted their horses; then he cried out in a loud voice to the army, as follows: 'My

brave and splendid Macedonians, Paphlagonians and Lacedaimonians, listen to me. The protection of the Lord God of Sabaoth assisted us, and we took Rome with all its islands, Jerusalem, Egypt, and advanced as far as the Great King Darius. If we conquer him, we shall achieve a great reputation, but if he conquers us, he will hunt us down throughout the whole world. It would be better for us if we all died today in battle than to be put to flight by the Persians. For wise and courageous men, death with honour is better than a useless life. As you will discover, we shall smash them quickly when the king is not with them: any army without a king is, as it were, headless. God has granted us that wherever we go, we conquer. Now I ask you to fight with all your strength. Let us fight; for an army that advances enthusiastically to war is a courageous army.'

103. Alexander attacks the Persians

Immediately Alexander mounted his horse, placed his helmet on his head, divided his army into three parts and moved it forward, while he came behind with his own troops. He put Antigonos and Ptolemy in charge of two troops. They charged the Persians immediately, smote them with their spears and broke their ranks; then they beat them with their swords so that they were knocked down before them. The Persians could not

withstand the sharp swords of the Macedonians, and so they gave way and retreated to their own ground. Alexander hunted the Persians down and came to the tent of Darius.

104. The flight of Darius

When Darius saw that his army had been broken, he mounted a fast horse and fled. Alexander gave orders to bury all those they had killed from Darius' army, but released all those they had taken prisoner. He told them to report back to Darius and tell him 'It is better for you, King Darius, to rule Persia, and to pay tribute rather than undertake another war with the Macedonians, since they have killed your brave commander Migas, and then they will kill you too.' Then Alexander set off and crossed the River Euphrates, and gave orders to destroy all the bridges across the river. Darius, without losing any time, issued orders by letter to all his empire to assemble in Babylon. They gathered together in a few days: when the army was counted it was found to number 2 million. With these forces they moved against Alexander.

105. Alexander is frightened of Darius

When Alexander saw that Darius had assembled such a large army, he became very frightened, but did not

admit it to anyone. He went into the midst of the army and said ‘My brave Lacedaimonians and Macedonians, if any man runs away, they will capture him quickly. Many creatures will die at the mere roar of a lion. Just so our enemies will die of fright as soon as they hear that we are marching against them. Now let us begin to hunt them down and kill them, since it has become usual for them to run away from us and to be defeated. True, Darius has brought a large army, but our own is blessed by fortune and wins all its battles. First and foremost, we have killed their great general Migas; so we shall be able to kill Darius very easily and take over his empire. Now it is for me to see how brave you are, and for you to demonstrate it.’

106. Alexander marches against Darius

Then Alexander advanced with a force of a million armed men. He told the whole army that if anyone should make a run for it before the battle was over, he would be whipped and then executed as a traitor.

107. Alexander’s dream

When Alexander was asleep, he saw in a dream the prophet Jeremiah, who said to him ‘Rise up, my child,

against Darius, and do not forget that you have the help of the God of Heaven and Earth. Carry on your head the jewel I gave you in Jerusalem, pray with all your heart to the God of Sabaoth, and you will conquer the army of Darius, however great it may be.' Alexander rose up from his dream very cheerful, and at dawn he moved the army to battle. He ordered them to play musical instruments on both sides, and divided his troops into three. When Darius saw Alexander, he also divided his own army into three immediately.

108. The battle of Alexander and Darius

The armies attacked each other with their spears and swords. The noise of the spears and swords and the neighing of the horses were so great that they could be heard far away. There was such slaughter and bloodshed on that day, from dawn to dusk, that the Earth trembled, while the blood flowed like a river.

109. Flight of the Persians

The Persians could not sustain the battle, and they turned and fled to their own ground. The Macedonians pursued them for three days and nights; 104,000 Persians were killed, and on Alexander's side 5,000. Two hundred thousand Persians were captured alive

and brought to Alexander: he released them and said ‘Don’t go to war again if you want to stay alive.’

110. Flight of Darius

Darius fled with 100 fast mounted troops, and entered the city of Persia. Alexander, meanwhile, reached the city of Babylon. The Babylonians came out to fight, and did not allow him to enter; Babylon was an exceptionally big city, and the River Euphrates ran through the centre of it. Alexander went and pitched camp above the city.

111. Alexander conquers Babylon

Alexander ordered them to dig trenches all the way from the camp, very deep and wide, so that the water of the river would flow through them. The Babylonians, who were celebrating a great night-time feast of their god Apollo, went with their wives and children to worship in the temple. The same night, Alexander diverted the water into the trenches, reducing the flow of the river, and entered the city with his army, ordering his troops to set fire to the city. When the Babylonians discovered Alexander’s cunning trick, they paid homage to him, and cried out to him in loud voices: ‘King Alexander, have mercy on us in God’s

name, and do not be angry with us, or we are lost.' As soon as he heard their pleas, he ordered the fires to be extinguished. The conflagration abated.

112. Babylon pays homage to Alexander

Then the Babylonians said to the king: 'Long life to you, king of the whole world.' Then they brought large numbers of gifts, including Darius' gold – 2,000 talents of it – 1,000 purebred horses, 100 lions with silver chains, 1,000 hunting leopards, 500 exceptionally fast Arab horses, 2,000 gold pieces, 1,000 cups, 3,000 war horses with leather armour, impenetrable to iron, the robe of Xerxes the king of Persia, which was adorned with the fangs of snakes and jewel-encrusted, the crown of King Sosochos, who had also been king of the whole world, the table of King Darius, a beautiful thing made of sapphires, which had in addition the wonderful property that whenever anyone ate at it he did not get indigestion. Alexander spent 30 days in Babylon.

113. Darius' great grief

When Darius heard that Alexander had taken Babylon, he felt great bitterness in his heart, and said, 'What have I suffered, wretched that I am, how did I raise

myself up to the skies and did not deign to mingle with ordinary people, and now I have fallen as far as the meanest person in the whole world, since Alexander has captured all my kingdom? It is a true saying that whatever a man takes unjustly, he must pay for it later with loss, and poverty, and with tears.'

114. The leaders console Darius

When the leaders heard of Darius' distress, they came to console him. 'Wondrous and most famous king, you know how much tribute you took from Philip, and from all the other kings; do not be cast down. The biggest ship is endangered when many winds are fighting it, until it makes it safe to harbour. It is the same with a great kingdom. Yesterday he was the victor, tomorrow it will be our turn to win, when we have a great army and many cavalry.'

115. A plot against Alexander

Immediately a lord named Abyssos, whom Darius was very fond of, came before the council, and said, 'Most high King, every man must suffer when the king is distressed. When I see your necessity, I am ready to lose my life for love of you. I shall go and assassinate Alexander, in order to liberate your kingdom.' Darius

was delighted, and replied, 'My dear Abyssos, if you kill Alexander, you will free all of Persia. Your own death will be life for all of Persia, your name will be honoured among all future generations, as if you were still alive, you may consider that my kingdom is the gift of your hand, and your fame will spread throughout the world, because of your great courage.'

116. Alexander's life in danger

Abyssos immediately saddled his horse, put on his armour, mounted, placed a Macedonian crest on his helmet, and went to mingle with the army of Alexander. Alexander was on horseback, in full armour, mustering his army. Abyssos came close to him, drew his sword, and would have struck him in the face, but did not succeed; the sword only struck his helmet and severed his crest, then slid down his head and shaved him like a razor.

117. Alexander is unharmed

Alexander realised immediately that the crime had not been committed by one of his own men, and said, 'It was not a Macedonian hand that struck, but a cowardly Persian.' At once they seized Abyssos, took his sword from his hand, disarmed him and brought

him to Alexander. Alexander said to him, 'Where do you come from, fellow, and what is your name?' He replied, 'My name is Abyssos, I am a Persian, the chief lord of Darius. I came to kill you for love of him, and to be destroyed in this hour so that I might liberate my lord and all Persia from your army.' Alexander said, 'Wretched Abyssos, did you make such an attempt through love of your master? I might have been killed by your hand: do you expect to remain alive?' Abyssos said, 'I wanted to do the will of my master, to please him; and, in my opinion, what happened was the will of the gods.' Alexander said, 'No man's hand can harm the man whom God protects, nor kill him; but you are going to die today.' Abyssos replied, 'I am in the hands of your Majesty, do as you please.' Alexander said, 'Since you risked death for the sake of your master, and carried out such a deed as no man had dared, I grant you your life. Go back to King Darius, and tell him that no man's hand can kill the man whom God loves. Let him change his arrogant heart, let him pay homage to me and bring me tribute with his army, and I will let him remain king of Persia.'

118. Abyssos returns to Darius

Abyssos bowed, and then returned to Darius and told him of his encounter with Alexander. Darius shook his head and said 'Abyssos, you would have succeeded if it

had been up to me, but what happens is what the gods will.' Abyssos said 'You must know, your majesty, that I did what your heart desired with my sword, and I would have died for love of you, since I have no other life than this to give on your behalf. I pay homage to your kingship, and I consider that I am in his service because he granted me my life.' Darius was sad, and said 'Gods and men both help the man who is lucky, but as for the unlucky, even his lords desert him; he may rise up high, but his fall is fast.'

119. Darius' orders to Abyssos

Abyssos set off to transfer to Alexander, and Darius instructed him to speak as follows: 'King Alexander, do not raise yourself up too high, for he who raises himself up can quickly fall. Sosanchos was king of the whole world, and tried to cross over even to Paradise because of his self-confidence, but the gods destroyed his men, and killed him along with all his army. Xerxes the king of Persia, because of his great pride, was killed by the men of Daphnaion, and was lost. I too raised myself up, but now I am the pupil of my own subordinates. Do not raise yourself up high Alexander, lest you later fall. If you wish that there should be peace between us, let the lands of the West and of Hellas, your country, be sufficient for you, and cease your campaigns; but if this proposal does not please you,

we prefer to die, along with our whole empire, rather than pay homage to you. A king does not pay homage to another king, since the one is only at peace when the other is dead. If you do not like my advice, be ready to fight within 50 days against the Persians who remain with me, brave and invincible as they are. Either we shall annihilate you and your army, or we shall all be utterly destroyed. The gods hold justice in their hands, and will bring things about as they decide.'

120. Abyssos returns to Alexander

When Abyssos had come to Alexander, he told him what Darius had said. Alexander, on hearing his message, shook his head and said 'Kingship is a sweet possession, and therefore every king must fight for it as best he can. According to the answers that Darius sends to me, it is scarcely possible that we shall make peace: nevertheless, may God give us peace.'

121. Alexander's dream

That night Alexander had a dream: the prophet Jeremiah came to him, dressed in his high-priestly robes, just as he had seen him in Jerusalem. Jeremiah said to him 'Go quickly against Darius as a messenger, trample him down along with all the armies of India

who are marching against you; if they recognise you, God will protect you.’ Alexander woke up and called for Ptolemy, Philon and Antiochos; he told them his dream, began to move and said to them ‘If I fall into danger and am lost, you are to divide the kingdoms of the world between you; and preserve the throne of Macedon so that my name survives.’ But they did not want to let him go, and broke out in lamentation. Alexander reassured them, ‘If God wishes me to be lost, the hands of the whole world are not capable of preserving me; but if God protects me, all the hands of Persia cannot kill me.’

122. Alexander goes to Darius

Alexander set off on his mission to Darius. He put on Persian clothing, on his head he put a helmet trimmed with gold, pearls and gems; on top of his costume he wore a tabard with the horns of an asp, interwoven with gold. When Darius heard that a messenger was coming he called a great meeting, so that the king should appear as splendid as possible. Alexander entered the palace of Darius, handed over the letter and said ‘My master King Alexander, who sends many greetings to your majesty, told me that you must read his answer.’ Darius was sitting on a throne four feet high, which was surrounded by figures of angels carrying lamps; the whole palace was covered in gold, and beautifully

furnished, with four columns in the centre, as well as four stones which flooded the whole palace with light at night time. The lords stood and marvelled at the beauty of Alexander, and at the clothes he wore. Then Darius gave orders that Alexander's letter should be read out in a loud voice.

123. Alexander's letter to Darius

'Alexander, the King of Kings, Emperor of the whole world by the power of the Providence of God above. You know well, King Darius, that you extracted tribute from my father. Before he died, he crowned me king, but you have insulted me with your arrogance, threatening to send someone else to rule Macedon, and to cast me down from my father's throne and bring me to your court to be your servant, as if I were a dumb child. But by the power of God, as you see, I have come here against you as a man. Though you wanted to do me wrong and to cast me down from my throne, I don't wish to harm you: continue to rule Persia and pay me tribute, and do not be ill-disposed. Turn your head, fall down and pay homage to me: if you do not, none of your soldiers will be spared, and nor will you yourself, by the hands of the Macedonians, as I predict. So be ready within 15 days to fight us with your whole army by the

Armenian River. I come against you as a man in his prime, not a silly child to be, as you supposed, your servant.'

124. Alexander dines with Darius

When Darius had heard this letter, he said openly to his lords 'Are you going to put up with such arrogance and insolence from Macedonia?' Alexander stood before Darius, and replied 'Macedonia is right to be proud today, because it has a worthy king and brave soldiers.' Then one of the great men of Persia said 'Why do you talk to the king this way?' Alexander replied 'I have a great master, I am his independent envoy, and I speak for my master.' Then he moved from the place where he was standing, and said 'Give me a letter to take back.' Darius said to Alexander 'Stay with us for dinner this evening, until we have written the letter.' Darius sat down to dinner with all the kings and lords who served him, and seated Alexander in the Ambassadors' seat opposite him. Food was brought and they dined; the wine steward poured for Darius and also for Alexander. When he had drunk his wine, he put the silver cup in his jacket. One of the lords said to him 'Why are you doing that at the king's table, fellow?' Alexander replied 'My master has the custom that every guest who sits at his table shall take away

the first and second cups from which he drinks, as a gift.'

125. Darius recognises Alexander

The lords were amazed at such audacity. Then Kantarkouses (whom Darius had sent at one time to be ruler of Macedonia, after Philip died) got up from the table and whispered in Darius' ear 'You should know, your majesty, that this messenger is Alexander: you must do whatever you like.' Darius was delighted, and said 'If what you say is true, this very day I have once again become king of the whole world. Perhaps fortune has returned to me, but still I don't believe that all the heads in the world are hanging by a single hair.' Kantarkouses replied 'You may cut off my head if it is not him.' Alexander noticed that they were conferring and realised what was going on; before they could seize him, he put his hand to his helmet and took out the ring which he had taken from Cleopatra the queen of Troy, which had a magic jewel in it, and put it on his finger. Darius was in great delight after hearing what Kantarkouses had to say, and said to the messenger 'Fellow, many people say that you look like Alexander.' Alexander replied 'King Darius, it is because I so much resemble my master Alexander that I am beloved by him, and receive higher honour than others. Many people mistake me for him and pay

homage to me in the belief that I am Alexander.' When Darius heard what Alexander said, he started to ponder what he should do in order not to be embarrassed afterwards. In his confusion he pushed the table away with his foot, got up from the meal, took the lanterns and went into the palace to think. Alexander remained sitting at the table with several of the lords, in the dark.

126. Alexander escapes from Darius

Then Alexander wrapped his robe around him and put his helmet down as a pillow, as if he were going to sleep. He worked out how to escape from his predicament; he got up quickly, ran to the palace gate, took one of the cups out of his jacket and said to the porter 'Take this cup of the king's and open the door: he has sent me to check the sentry posts.' Then he ran to the gate of the city, took out the second cup and said to the porter 'Take this cup of the king's and open up quickly; he has sent me to call the voivodes to come in for a royal council.' They obeyed immediately, and he ran to the place where he had left his horse, mounted and fled with all speed until he reached the Armenian River; it was frozen solid and he crossed easily. There he found Antiochos, Philon and Ptolemy, who were waiting anxiously with a considerable force, and explained to them how Darius had recognised him.

127. Darius pursues Alexander

Darius went into his palace and called his 12 councillors together, and asked them 'The ambassador is Alexander himself; what do you think we ought to do?' They replied 'If this is true, then the gods have taken pity on Persia, you and us.' Darius ordered Kantarkouses to take them to capture Alexander. They lit lamps and went to find him, but they could not. They asked the guards, but they had not recognised him, and they only found his clothes. The porters said 'A man came an hour ago, and gave us two of the king's cups, asking us to open the gates because the king had sent him to check the sentries, and to call the voivodes to a council with the king.' Then Kantarkouses and a king called Krises, realising what a trick Alexander had played, took 300 mounted men and went after him. They reached the river about sunrise, and seeing Alexander escaping with his own troops they were very frightened and wondered what to do.

128. Alexander mocks his pursuers

The river which Alexander had just crossed had the property that it froze every night, and thawed during the day. So Alexander called to his pursuers 'Why are you turning back, fellows? You are pursuing the wind, and no one catches up with the wind. You can see with

your own eyes that the horses of the Macedonians are not daunted by mountain or flood; so why this vain pursuit? Go off and tell king Darius that because of the honours he has paid me, I am grateful to him – but not for ever. So let him be ready by the river to join battle.'

129. Darius flees

Kantarkouses returned to Darius, and when the latter heard about Alexander's trick he wept and said 'Do you see, my lords, what a trick the son of Philip has played on us? He has taken all our land, trampled down our entire kingdom and grabbed it for himself. Now what is going to become of us?' He ordered them to write a plaintive letter to Porus the king of India. They wrote as follows.

130. Darius' letter to Porus

'To the king who is the highest of all the kings of the earth, Lord of the masters of the world, the earthly god of India – Darius the king of Persia, the miserable and unfortunate, writes today and pays homage. As you know well, I was lord over 30 kings. Now one of the slightest of men, Alexander, has risen up and taken all my kingdom, including Jerusalem, Egypt and

Babylon, and annexed them to the West. The Persians were afraid and were unable to withstand him. We have fought two battles, and in both he has conquered us. So I beg your Majesty to give us the assistance we need for a third battle, in which either we shall destroy him or we shall ourselves be annihilated.'

131. Porus sends help to Darius

When Porus read the letter from Darius, he shook his head and said 'He will never find happiness unless this affliction is removed. Darius was considered equal to the gods, and now he is in flight from the Macedonians, whose king Philip used to be his slave.' Then he called to his lords and said 'Raise an army of 300,000 and march to help Darius. Do not kill Alexander, but bring him to me alive, so I can see what kind of man he is, since many people tell me that he is clever, brave and resourceful.' So they immediately mobilised the armies of India and went to help Darius.

132. Darius goes after Alexander

When Darius heard that the Indian forces had arrived, he summoned his own forces from Persia as well, counted them, and found that he had 1 million troops. He mobilized them for war, and then sent infiltrators in

pursuit of Alexander. When Alexander saw the spies, he gave orders to lure them to a high place, ordered his troops to arm, and divided them into companies. The spies were amazed when they saw Alexander's army. Alexander had them presented with Macedonian armour and said to them, 'I grant you your lives; go back to your master, and when you go to war, wear this armour, so that the Macedonians do not kill you.' They went back, and the army of India asked them about Alexander. They said 'We saw a large army of brave men, strong and fearless; their horses are all thoroughbred stallions.' When the Indian troops heard this, they trembled, and their march to battle was unenthusiastic. Darius was angry with the spies and ordered that their tongues should be cut out, so that they would not continue to praise Alexander.

133. Alexander's battle against the Persians

The armies clashed and attacked each other with their lances. There was such a wind that the dust that rose up obscured the sun, and the sound of clashing arms was heard for an immense distance. At that time it was impossible to know who was Persian, who Indian and who Macedonian. The Macedonians wielded their swords like reapers in the fields in the heat of summer; they killed many men that day. When night fell, the Indians and the Persians were frightened and

started to run away; but at dawn they came back to the fight. When Alexander saw them, he was unable to restrain himself, but rushed upon the Indian army with 100,000 selected troops, and there was a great slaughter. When the Indians saw Alexander, they ran away at once.

134. Flight of Darius

When the Persians saw the Indian army running away, they began to do the same, because they could not face the battle. When Darius saw his troops in retreat, he went out of his mind and started to flee himself. Poor man! As he fled, he said ‘Alas, I am the insignificant Darius, who once rose as high as the heavens, and now I am not worthy to live even on Earth.’ All the Persians fled and returned to the city of Persia.

135. Darius is taken prisoner

Two of Darius’ best friends, Kantarkouses and Ariobarzanes, ran up to where he was, and one of them struck him from one side, the other from the other. They wounded him and knocked him off his horse, threw him to the ground and stripped him. So Darius was left lying there, naked and half-dead.

136. The Persians pay homage to Alexander

When Alexander heard of the murder of Darius, he immediately sent a number of soldiers to tell the Persians not to run away because Darius had been killed; and that, if they did run away, every one of them would die that very day by the hands of the Macedonians. He also sent Philones to the Indian army to seize their horses and to send them to Porus their master. Philones went and gave the Indians Alexander's order. At once they all dismounted from their horses, paid homage, handed over their standards, their horses and all their weapons, apologised and set off naked to their master Porus. Philones advised them to say to King Porus that he should remain in his kingdom and stay where he was, not giving up his power to anyone else, and that he should know that Philones, according to the will of his master Alexander, was master of all Persia. The Persians separated themselves from the army of India, paid homage to Philones, and merged themselves with the army of Macedonia. They were very delighted because they had expected that Alexander would make them his slaves.

137. Alexander finds Darius

When Alexander arrived with his army in the plains of Persia, he found Darius lying in the dust, barely alive.

He greeted him 'King Alexander, dismount quickly, and come and hear what I have to say.' Alexander turned and saw him, and said 'Who are you, fellow?' Darius replied 'I am Darius. The wheel of fortune raised me up to the heavens and now it has thrown me down into Hades. You, Alexander, you saw me with your own eyes when you came as messenger. Remember your own death, and do not leave me in the dust to die; for you are not merciless like the Persians.' When Alexander heard Darius' words, he was sorrowful and burst out weeping; he dismounted, took off his robe and covered the dying man. He ordered the Macedonians to build a horse-wagon of silver and gold to place Darius on. Alexander supported him on one side as they walked the distance of an arrow's flight, and said to him 'I have done you royal honours; even if you are my enemy, give me your blessing.' Then he placed him in the wagon and headed for the city.

138. The Persians pay homage to Alexander

Alexander dressed himself in rich clothing, put on his head the crown of Solomon the king of Jerusalem, went to the city of the Persians and entered the palace of Darius, and sat down on his throne. This throne was adorned with precious gems, and was four feet in

height. Then the Persians came and paid homage to Alexander, and with a loud voices they all wished him a long life.

139. The last wishes of Darius

When Darius came near to Alexander, he ordered them to bring his daughter, Roxandra. He took her by the hand, gave her to Alexander, and said 'Receive, Alexander, the daughter of my loins, Roxandra.' Alexander got up from his throne, took her by the hand and seated her by him on the throne of Darius. He took the crown from his head and placed it on hers; Roxandra removed the ring from her finger and put it in Alexander's hand. Alexander said 'See, King Darius, your daughter wishes to rule the whole world along with me, and to turn the sorrow of her heart into joy.' When Darius saw his daughter wearing Alexander's crown, he rejoiced greatly, blessed them and said 'May the rulers and kings of the earth all pay homage to you, Alexander, and may you be king of the whole world.' Then Darius brought his wife and gave her too to Alexander, and said 'Receive my wife as a substitute for your mother Olympias. Love the Persians, because they are very loyal to their master; you may discipline my murderers as you think fit.' Soon after speaking these

words, Darius raised his eyes to the bystanders and expired.

140. The punishment of Darius' murderers

Alexander and all his lords and all his army buried Darius with great pomp. He announced for all to hear that whoever had killed Darius should come to him and receive the reward he deserved. The murderers came forward and he said to them 'Why did you murder your king?' They replied 'His death has made you king of Persia.' Then Alexander said 'It was your true master, who nourished you and honoured you, whom you killed: so what are you likely to do to me, a foreigner?' Then he ordered them to be hanged beside the grave of Darius.

141. Alexander marries Roxandra

Then Alexander brought all the kings and rulers into the palace and married Roxandra according to the custom of the time. She was exceptionally beautiful and intelligent, so that no one in the whole world could, or will, be found to compare with her. When the marriage had taken place, he ordered everybody to change their clothes, and the Persians put on Macedonian garb, and the Macedonians Persian garb.

142. What Alexander found in Persia

He went into the royal palace and ordered them to make an inventory of Darius' goods. They found 12 chests of pure gold, 20 rooms full of silver and 20 towers full of coin. Five hundred trained hunting lions. There on the plain of Persia he counted his army and found that there were 4 million cavalry. Alexander spent a whole year in Persia hunting and enjoying himself.

143. Alexander subdues Krises

When a year had passed, he moved with his army against Krises the king of Lydia, who had refused to offer submission to Alexander. But his subjects, both great and small, plotted against him, captured him and brought him, bound, to Alexander. They also brought more gold than had ever been seen in the whole world, all of which was divided amongst the army.

144. Alexander's journey to the land of monsters

After this Alexander and his army advanced to the right, and they found wild men, shaped like men

but with the faces of beasts. From here he marched 15 days until he came to a desert. Here there were wild women 18 feet tall: they were as broad as buffaloes and their hair shone like the stars. They fell upon the army and killed many men, until Alexander arrived. From here he marched for 50 days and came to a place where there were great caves inhabited by ants, which seized one of the horses and carried it into the darkness of the cave. Alexander gave orders to pile up dry brushwood in the cave; they set fire to it and many were burned. From there he marched eight days and arrived at a broad river, half a day's journey across. He pondered how to make the crossing. He gave orders to build canoes, and in 60 days he had brought the whole army across. When they had crossed, they found men a single cubit tall, called Pithekoi, who came and paid homage to Alexander, bringing him honey and dates.

145. The new king of the Pithekoi

Alexander built a city there. He made one of them king, and explained to them how to behave like humans and to believe in the God of Heaven and Earth. Then he set off on a journey of 100 days; and from the land of the Pithekoi he took so much honey and so many dates that it sustained the army for a year.

146. The pillar of Sosonchos

Next he came to a broad plain at the head of which was a lake as cold as winter's ice; its water was as sweet as sugar. There they found a pillar whose face was encrusted with gold, and with an inscription, as follows: 'I am Sosonchos, who once was king of the world. I rose very high, I wanted to discover the ends of the earth. I came to this plain with my army and the gods sent wild men against us, who killed me along with all my soldiers. If anyone else should come this far, let him not advance any further, because he will not find anything good there.' The plain was covered with human skulls and bones. Alexander read the inscription and then took his cloak and covered it up, so that no one else in the army should read it, and be frightened. The commanders of the army asked him what the inscription on the pillar said, and he told them that it described a beautiful country ahead of them, and many other things; and thus he persuaded them to continue the expedition.

147. Alexander's battle with the wild men

From there they advanced two days and came to a high mountain, where they saw ugly men, 12 feet tall, with very hairy skins, who stared savagely at the army and did not run away. They told Alexander about them,

and he came to have a look. Meanwhile they stood their ground and gazed fearlessly at the army. When Alexander saw them he trembled, and said to himself 'These are the wild men who killed king Sosonchos with all his army.' He decided to arm the troops to resist them bravely. They took a woman and brought her up to the wild men to see what they would do. At once one of the wild men came, snatched the woman and started to eat her. The woman screamed loudly, and they ran and rescued her, and killed the savage with their spears. The other savages heard him shrieking loudly in pain, and a large number of them fell upon the army. They pursued Alexander's army as far as the pillar of Sosonchos. There, Antiochos arrived with his troops and led them on to the plain in pursuit: they slaughtered a great many of the savages. They took one alive, a child of ten, who was two cubits taller than any of the men in the army. They killed 1 million of the savages. The wild men's custom was to eat anyone whose blood they shed.

The next day, Alexander found that 2,000 of his soldiers had been killed. So the army commanders and the chiefs of Macedonia got together and approached Alexander, saying 'Save us from the death which we have encountered at the hands of the wild men, and do not let us all perish here at the end of the earth, where you have brought us; we do not want to die wretched and forgotten in this alien place. The army cannot accompany you any further, because they are

frightened.’ When Alexander heard these words, he was very sorrowful. He said to the army ‘My beloved, brave Macedonians, let me have your assistance a little further, for we have nearly reached the edge of the world, and with the help of God we shall soon return to our own land and rest.’

148. Alexander’s great journey

They escaped the wild men and crossed to another place which was very beautiful and full of a variety of fruits. There they found two pillars plated with gold. On the first pillar was engraved the figure of Herakles, and on the second one that of Queen Sevira. When Alexander saw the carved figures, he wept and said ‘King Herakles, and Queen Sevira, who were so renowned in the world, how did you come to this alien world to die?’ He found there was much silver and gold in the pillars of Herakles: he divided it among the army. They spent six days there enjoying themselves.

149. Alexander encounters monstrous beasts

He went on from there with his army, and after advancing for ten days, he came upon strange men with six arms and one foot, who came to fight him. He killed many of them and captured some alive, and intended to

take them back to the world for a marvel; but because they could not find out what they ate, they lost them all and they died of hunger. Another ten days further on they came to the home of the Dogheads. These had the bodies of men and the heads of dogs, and their voices were human but they walked on all fours. Alexander killed many of them too. After ten days they left that place and went on to a place near the sea, where they lay down to sleep. One of the men's horses suddenly bellowed and dragged him towards the sea. That night a crab came out of the sea and ate it. The rest heard about it and came out by night and seized many of the horses, with their riders, and dragged them into the sea. So they left and went to another place, again close to the sea, where they found food of every kind, and they stayed there a while to rest the army.

150. Alexander visits the Blessed Ones

Alexander espied an island out in the sea, and ordered his craftsmen to build canoes; they set out to sea. The men of the island ran to pay homage to them, and they sang his praises, saying 'Long life to Alexander, the king of the whole world. But why have you come to visit us, who are altogether naked, as you see?' Alexander said to them 'I do not want anything from you, I have only come to see your country. I would like you to explain to me how you know my name,

even though you have never seen me, and how you know such good Greek out here in this remote place.’ They replied ‘We have known for many years that you would come to visit us, and that we should see you, since we were informed of it by King Herakles and Queen Sevira, who were rulers of the Greeks in Macedonia; but later, when the Greeks began to practice licentiousness, they recognised their impurity, built 50 large galleys, collected all the wise people from their kingdom, and sailed away from that lawless land. So they came as far as where you saw those pillars, lived there for two years, and then died. King Herakles prophesied and told us your name, and that you would come here. On his death all the ships were burnt, so that we should not be able to return to the sinful world. But we began to practice crime along the lines we had learned before. When God saw our sins he was angry at us and sent the wild men, who killed many of us. Those of us who escaped fled to this island, where our food is fruit and our pursuit is philosophy. So, Alexander, take from us selected sages, since you want to go to savage places, and do not know what you will encounter.’

When Alexander heard this speech, he was amazed and said ‘Letters are more precious than silver and gold, since a wise man in a difficult place can save a thousand thousand men, while a fool would lose them all.’ He asked the sages ‘Shall we have more battles to fight?’ They replied, ‘There are no more battles

ahead. There where the River of Ocean runs, there are the Isles of the Blessed. The men there live at peace with God, and their minds are all focussed on God.' Alexander said to them 'Where did they come from?' They replied 'Adam and Eve had been ordered not to eat of the tree which stood in the middle of Paradise. But they disobeyed the word of God and ate its fruit, and so they were driven out of Paradise. They came to this place, where they dwelt for 100 years, always with their eyes turned towards Paradise, and wept frequently. They had two sons, Cain and his brother. Adam and Eve were very sorrowful when Abel was murdered. God saw their great and inconsolable grief, and sent an angel, who said "Why do you mourn so much? God is getting tired of it. God made him from earth, and God has returned him to earth, to which all must return who are born and ever will be born. God will give you another son, Seth, in place of Abel; but you must go away from this place and go to live in the wide world. After 5,500 years have passed, you will once again see Paradise." In due course Seth was born, raised and had children on the island of the Blessed: so the Blessed are the descendants of Seth.' Alexander said to the sages 'How do we get there?' They showed him, and he travelled for six days, until he came to a mountain, which he climbed and was able to see the Island of the Blessed. He told them to build a pillar with a statue of Alexander, holding his sword in his hand and pointing out the island to the

Macedonians. He set off from there and after marching another six days came to another very high mountain. On the slope of the mountain he found a man bound in chains, twenty fathoms tall and ten fathoms broad, whose weeping could be heard a distance of three days' journey. Alexander and his army trembled when they saw him. On another, even higher mountain, they found a woman bound; she was also twenty fathoms tall and ten fathoms broad. There was a bird perched on her feet, and it had her head in its beak and would not allow her to talk. From there they marched eight days until they reached a number of lakes, where they heard bitter wailing; there were many snakes in these lakes. It appeared to Alexander that this was the place of punishment for sinners. They went on a little and came to the River of Ocean, and the Island of the Blessed; they camped by the edge of the river. The island was 20 miles from land.

Alexander ordered the carpenters to build canoes, and he went over to the island with Antiochos and Ptolemy. The island was full of innumerable fruits. It was also adorned with images, and other wonderful things such as the eye of man had never seen. Much of the fruit was lying on the ground, and in the branches of the trees perched many birds of every kind, singing most beautifully in melodies in which joy and melancholy were combined. At the bases of the trees rose cool springs, whose water was as sweet as sugar. Alexander encountered one of the Blessed

Ones, and said to him 'Peace between you and us, brother.' He replied 'Let there be peace for all men, Alexander.' Alexander started to converse with him, and he replied 'Go forward a space to meet our chiefs, who are waiting for you, and will bring you to our king, Evaenthes. He will instruct you about your soul, your life and your death.' Then many of them came out to meet Alexander; they all kissed him on the mouth, and told him what was going to happen to him. Alexander was amazed at their intelligence, and said 'Can these be men or angels?' They brought him to their king Evaenthes, who was sitting beneath a fruit tree, beside which a stream flowed; his mattress and his shade were made from the leaves of trees. When he saw Alexander, he nodded his head and said 'Why have you come to us, King Alexander, from the vain and sinful world?' He took him by the hand, seated him beside himself, and said 'Greetings, Alexander, head of all men. If you want to control the whole world, you will meet Antakes.' When Alexander heard that he was afflicted at heart and asked 'Why do you tell me such a thing?' Evaenthes replied 'A great and wise man does not require explication of sayings.' Alexander said 'Would you like us to bring the food we have from our land?' 'Bring it', said Evaenthes. Then Alexander ordered Antiochos to bring pure bread and wine. Evaenthes looked at them but did not accept them, and said 'We do not eat food like this, but our food comes from the branches you see above me; our drink comes

from the stream you see before me; and our clothing comes from the leaves of the trees. Our minds are devoted night and day towards the all-powerful Sabaoth. Our life is mostly lived in this place, and when our end comes we transfer to a finer dwelling. We never suffer troubles, but are always cheerful, and we praise God constantly. You, Alexander, are the first to come to us from the sinful world, because apart from you no soul has been able to find it.' Alexander said 'All that you have said is good and beautiful; but explain to me how you are born, since there are no women among you.' Evaenthes replied 'We do have women, but they are not here, but on another island, six days distant. We cross over once a year, like animals, for intercourse, and spend 30 days with the women. When a child is born, if it is male, its father collects it after one year and brings it to us, but if it is female it stays with its mother until it is grown up.' Alexander said 'If you permit, I should like to see that island also.' Evaenthes replied 'You may see the island, but you will not see anything there. You may go to the bronze building, but you must not look inside, or your life will be at an end.'

Alexander did not believe what he said, and crossed over to the island, but he saw nothing there. Then he advanced to the bronze building and walked all the way round it, but did not dare to look inside; only God knows what was in there. When Alexander had seen nothing, he went back to the Blessed Ones, and spoke

boldly to Evaenthes: 'Tell us, most wise king, what lies beyond here.' The other replied 'On that mountain which you see, covered all over with beautiful forests, is the place called Eden, where God himself planted his Paradise. There he created Adam and Eve, and set them to guard the garden; but the Devil was envious of them and told them to eat from the tree which God had forbidden; and so they were expelled from Paradise.' Alexander said 'Is it possible that I should go there too?' Evaenthes replied 'It is impossible for a soul to visit Paradise accompanied by its body. This is especially because the mountain is very high, and is surrounded by fortifications of bronze, and on top of the fortifications stand angels with six wings, with weapons of blazing fire.'

151. Alexander departs from the Blessed Ones

Before Alexander left the Land of the Blessed, they all came to kiss him and bade him farewell with great honours. Alexander said to them 'If I had not wished to distress the Macedonians with the thought that they would die far from home, I would have remained here with you to live a life like that of angels.' Evaenthes said 'Go in peace, Alexander. You will rule the whole world, and afterwards you will return to your mother, the Earth, until we are discovered all together on the day of resurrection, and each will be rewarded

according to his deeds.' Then Alexander left the Island of the Blessed, returned to his army, gathered them together and told them everything he had seen.

152. Alexander goes into the Darkness

Ten days later they came to a broad plain. In the middle of it was a deep, wide crevasse which extended from one edge to the other, so that they could not cross it. Alexander gave orders to build a great bridge, and thus his army crossed over. In the middle of the bridge he inscribed the following words: 'This structure was erected by order of Alexander the King, and he crossed it with his army after leaving the Land of the Blessed.' After four days they came to the Land of Darkness. Alexander ordered them to bring mares who had young foals. They left the foals at the entrance and marched into the darkness for 24 hours. A proclamation went to the whole army that everyone should pick gravel up from the ground as they went. Those who picked things up, when they got back to the light, looked at them and found that the gravel was of solid gold, and were sorry that they had not taken more. From there they marched for four days, until Alexander encountered two very beautiful birds with human faces. They spoke to him in human voices and said 'Alexander, why are you tempting God? He will become angry with you, and you will be lost in the desert with all your army.'

Do as we tell you: turn back to the right, and return to meet your usual enemies, since the king of India is making ready to fight you.' Then Alexander turned right and continued for eight days. Arriving at a lake, he pitched camp to rest. The cooks began to prepare food, placing a number of dried fish in the water to soften up; but they came to life and escaped into the lake. When Alexander heard how the fish had come back to life, he was amazed and shocked. He gave orders and the whole army went swimming in the lake with their horses, until they were exhausted with their efforts. Then they marched for two days and came to another lake whose water was as sweet as sugar. They dived in to swim but were attacked by a large fish. They fled but the fish came after them and pursued them out of the water. Alexander got on his horse and killed it, and then ordered the men to cut it up. They found inside it a large precious stone, the size of a goose's egg, which shone like the sun. He ordered them to fix it on his standard, and they carried it in front of Alexander like a lantern. Then they advanced to another lake, and lay down to rest. Towards evening, women came out of the lake and sang songs so beautiful that the men nearly went mad. Apparently, these were the Nereids, of whom we often hear in stories. Then they marched on for six days and came to a place where there was a great thicket, from which a large number of men emerged to fall upon the army; but from the waist down they were horses. They were

all archers, and the barbs of their arrows were made of hard stone; they did not have iron at all. They moved as fast as if they were flying. When Alexander saw them, he said to the Macedonians 'Let us devise a trick to capture one of these and take it home to Macedonia as a raree show'. He ordered them to dig holes and cover them with dry reeds, and then sent men to entice the creatures to battle. Unaware of the trap, they fell into the holes. The Macedonians killed 12,000 of them, and captured another 6,000 alive to tame them. They wanted to bring them back to the World. They were so fast that nothing could catch them, and when they fired their arrows, they never missed. Alexander gave them all weapons and trained them to be auxiliaries in his coming battles. But one day, after they had re-entered the World, by chance a cold wind blew, and they all died. After 60 days the army reached a temple and prayed; Alexander found in it a number of inscriptions which prophesied his death; he was very upset. From there they marched another ten days and discovered men with a single foot, with tails like sheep; they captured a number of them and brought them to Alexander. 'Who are you?' he asked them. They replied 'Alexander, have mercy on us and release us, because we came here because of our weakness, in order to hide.' When Alexander heard that, he let them go. They leapt from rock to rock, laughing at Alexander, and saying 'Alexander conquered the whole world by his cunning; but we

laughed at him and he let us go. Our flesh is more tasty than that of any bird or animal, our bodies are crammed with precious gems and pearls, and our skin is impenetrable to iron.' When Alexander heard that, he laughed and said 'A man's tongue can lose him his head.' Then he ordered 200,000 horsemen to equip themselves with hunting dogs, hounds and leopards. They surrounded the mountain, released the hounds, the dogs and the leopards, and thus they captured the men and brought them to Alexander. He ordered them to be slaughtered, and had them skinned and their skins dried; inside their bodies they found a vast treasure of precious gems. He ordered the Persians to eat their flesh, and it was sweeter than any flesh or fowl.

153. Alexander returns to the light

Alexander and his army marched then for six days and came to the borders of India, where they emerged into the light of the World. It was six months since he had seen the inscription at the city of the sun which predicted his death, and he remained very unhappy whenever he chanced to think about it. But then he remembered the one-footed men, and laughed. The Macedonians observed this and laughed too; they had not realised that Alexander was sorrowful, since he always presented a cheerful face to them. Porus the king of India learnt that Alexander was at his borders,

and wrote him the following letter, which he sent immediately by means of a trusted messenger.

154. Porus' letter to Alexander

‘Porus, the great king of India, who shines like a god, to Alexander the king. I have heard tell that you have killed King Darius and are very proud of it; and now in your ignorance you have come against me, to be destroyed. You know well that whenever I am angry the whole Earth trembles. If all the kingdoms of the world were to come together, they would not be able to stand against me. What is in your mind, and what sort of a man are you, who have come to make war on me? I surmise that you are bored with your life, and that is why you have come. If you wish to hang on to your life, and gain my support, send me tribute from the whole world that you have conquered; if you refuse, you will not escape my hands. Neither Macedonia nor any other place will be able to hide you, since I have sworn to come against you and bring you down by force.’

155. Alexander's reply to Porus

‘Alexander the King of Kings, not by my own will but by the will of the all-powerful Sabaoth, who created

Heaven and Earth, to the king of India, Porus, who claims that he shines like the Sun, and has become a god on Earth – but who is a nothing, a donkey, a madman, the most unfortunate man in the world. You write to me that I have killed Darius and become very proud as a result. He made himself just as godlike in Persia as you are now doing in India; but I killed him, by the power of the all-powerful Sabaoth. You too sent him assistance, but you were not able to help him, because you had not the power. It is my hope that I shall kill you too and trample on your gods. I shall attack you as a wretched man, not as a king, because you do not believe in the unseen God, but instead you say that you are yourself a god, you crazy and ignorant man. Though you may boast that you have a great army, the power of mine is such that I shall defeat you. If God grants it and I capture you alive, you will die a painful death and will descend with those gods of yours to be punished in the depths of Hades.’

156. Porus’ speech to his commanders

When Porus saw Alexander’s letter, he said to his commanders ‘Alexander is trying to frighten me; no one in the world has ever sent me a letter like this. Muster all my troops as quickly as possible. Send letters to the

other kings of India and order them to join me.' When they had arrived, he counted his whole army and found that it numbered 50 million. He also had 10,000 lions trained for war, and 100,000 war-elephants. Then Alexander arrived with all his troops. When they saw the size of Porus' army, the Persians and Macedonians were so frightened that they plotted to betray Alexander and thus save their own skins; but Ptolemy learnt of the plot and reported it to Alexander.

157. Alexander's speech to his army

When Alexander heard about this, he assembled his whole army before him and said 'Beloved Macedonians, superior to all races, we have conquered the whole World, we have explored the Inhabited Zone, and are you now afraid of the cowardly Indians? If I have lost my place in your hearts, and your love, and you do not want to fight, you will kill me today with your own hands. If I knew that you would be treated better by King Porus, I myself would deliver myself into your hands. But you must know that if anything happens to me none of you will ever see Macedonia again, or live much longer. Three cubits of earth will suffice to bury me, but you will live on wretchedly in a strange land, in slavery and servitude. Woe to those who betray their master, as you planned to betray me;

you will die a horrible death hereafter. I myself will go and fight with Porus, king against king, and the armies can stay in their places; if God grants that I kill him, it will become clear that I am the sole ruler of the whole world, and not by your power. But if he kills me, you will die an unpleasant death in a strange land.'

158. The army's reply to Alexander

When the army heard Alexander's speech they were very disturbed, and said 'King Alexander, we would rather all die today than that you should suffer any harm. The plot was not devised by us, but only by the Persians, because they are cowards, no better than women, and were afraid of the enemy.'

159. Alexander's promise

When Alexander heard that it was the Persians who were responsible for the plot, he was angry and full of rage. He ordered that they should all dress in women's clothes, and cover their heads with red veils like the ones that are worn in Persia up to this day. Then he ordered his army to take up its weapons. There were 6 million of them, and he wrote to Philones and Seleukos, as follows.

160. Alexander's letter to Philones

‘Alexander the King of Kings to his beloved Philones and Seleukos. Bear in mind that we have seen the whole World, and have returned unharmed; now we have come to India and are going to fight against Porus. The moment you receive my letter, hasten to India with all the armies of the West.’

161. The deployment of Porus and Alexander

When he had sent the letter, he marched straight to war. When the two armies came close, Porus released 10,000 lions against Alexander's army, while the latter deployed against the lions 4,000 buffaloes and innumerable oxen. The lions fell on the buffaloes and oxen and killed them. Alexander divided his army into three divisions, and Porus did the same. Both sides struck up martial music. The two armies came together and fought until the setting of the sun. In that battle 200,000 of Porus' troops were slain, and 6,500 of Alexander's. Porus summoned the kings and all his chief men to a council, and addressed them as follows: ‘A vast number of our men have been killed today while we were fighting the Macedonians: what are we going to do?’ The chiefs replied ‘Most high king, do not send any more men to battle, but let us prepare the great elephants to intervene.’

162. Porus sends in the elephants

Immediately Porus released 100,000 elephants. They had structures like towers on top of them, and on each elephant there were 20 armed men. When Alexander came in view of the elephants, he ordered every horseman to hang bells on his horse. He also had 2 million foot soldiers whom he ordered to slice at the feet of the elephants. Alexander's infantry clashed with the elephants and the soldiers cut at the elephant's feet. When the elephants heard the bells on the horses they were frightened and began to run away. Then Alexander killed 30,000 of Porus' troops, while only 12,000 of Alexander's troops were slain. Then Porus crossed the Alphios River in boats and camped on the bank of the river. Alexander waited on the other bank, and they glowered at each other.

163. Philones brings his army to Alexander

After six days, Philones and Seleukos arrived with all the armies of the West: their number was uncountable, and they were all armed. They also brought 100,000 horses along with 30,000 camels, loaded with gold for the journey. The two spoke as follows to Alexander: 'Beloved master, king of the whole World, you must not stand opposite the King of India and stare at him, but you must fall upon him without delay.

Porus has many more troops than we do; and if he sees us shrinking back he will gain strength; we must attack him immediately with our army which has now rested and harass him.' Alexander said 'Porus' army is great, the river is impassable; so what are we going to do?' Philones said 'The right wing of the Macedonians is immobile, and their horses cannot cross the water; so send me alone to play your part, since your destiny cannot be halted by mountains or ravines or great rivers. You must not fight against Porus, because you are the king of the whole Inhabited World; but I can fight in your stead because I am king of Persia, just as he is of India, and so we are equals.' Alexander said 'Do as you propose.' So he gave him a million troops, while he had a similar number of his own; and in addition he took 200,000 foot soldiers. Philones gave the order and each horseman brought a foot soldier mounted behind him, armed only with sword and spear. Philones crossed the river while Porus' troops were eating, and as soon as they were over they hurled the foot soldiers from the horses.

164. Philones' battle against Porus

When Philones fought the army of Porus, the horsemen and foot soldiers inflicted great slaughter, so that every man was afraid. Alexander saw the bravery of Philones and was amazed. Then he ordered his troops

to arm, and followed Philones' example. The armies of India fought bravely, but eventually they were defeated and began to run away. Alexander and his army hunted them down and killed all those they caught, but also took many alive. In that battle, 1 million of Porus' troops were killed, and 3,800 of Alexander's.

165. Porus' lament

Porus halted where he had fled and said 'Wretched am I: my great and powerful commanders have fallen while the weak have gained the power; they have established the power of Persia and put my armies to death. The Alphios River did not save us, so what can save us now?' Alexander came to the tent of Porus and sent his armies to pillage India; but King Porus went and entered the City of the Sun, and wrote to all the kings in all the parts of the North. His letter read as follows.

166. Porus' letter to the kings of the North

You will know, dear kings, my brothers, that Alexander has taken control of the whole Inhabited World, and has killed King Darius. We have fought three battles, and he has annihilated my power and my entire army. He crossed the River Alphios with his army, and is now pillaging my land and ravaging it. I beg you, run

to my aid, because if he destroys me, then you will be unable to stand against him.'

167. The kings of the North assist Porus

When the kings heard what Porus had written, they all banded together to assist him. They brought an army of 6 million; Porus had 2 million, and Alexander 10. They got ready to fight, and when the two armies were face to face, Alexander said to Philones: 'Go and spy on the army of Porus and see how big it is.' Philones said 'How shall I spy on it?' Alexander said 'Go as a messenger with a letter from me;' and so he ordered a letter to be composed.

168. Alexander's letter to Porus

'Alexander the king and master of kings to King Porus, many greetings. You know well, that a sharpened sword does not cut off the head that bows down. If you love your life, give me tribute and gifts, and you may retain your whole kingdom and control it. Do not be over-proud, for he who raises himself high falls quickly. I can see that you have the enmity of the soldiers of India, and you are going to lose them all; but as I love the lives of my Macedonians, I propose that we fight a duel, you and I, today, and then our

armies will not need to slaughter each other. Whoever kills the other may take his entire army and be king of the whole world. If your soul cannot bring itself to fight with me, then give me gifts and tribute, and settle down peacefully. Send me your answer quickly and tell me which you choose.'

169. Porus accepts the challenge

When Porus saw Alexander's letter, he ordered it to be read out to him. When it had been read, he said 'I too would like to fight a duel with Alexander, so that our armies can have a rest for a day.' The army was delighted when they heard that, and Porus in his vanity said to Philones 'Are you Philones the lord of Persia and successor of Darius?' Philones replied 'Certainly I am the lord of Persia, and the best-beloved of Alexander.' Porus shook his head and said 'From today onwards you will both be masters of nothing. Alexander will certainly meet death at my hands. Go and tell him that I will wait for him in the field, so that we can fight together, as both of us desire.'

170. Alexander's duel with Porus

Philones went to Alexander and told him Porus' answer. When he heard it, he armed himself immediately, mounted his horse and went out to the field. He

asked Philones for his opinion of Porus' martial skill. Philones said 'His body is tall and massive, but his flesh is rotten. Take heart, you will kill him as soon as you engage.'

171. Alexander defeats Porus

Alexander immediately took his lance and went towards Porus; and the latter likewise approached Alexander. When each saw the other, they spurred their horses and charged each other with their lances, but they both broke. Then they drew their swords; at once there was a great uproar and disturbance in Porus' army. Porus turned to see what was going on, and Alexander charged his horse against Porus, raised his right hand and struck him. Alexander's horse Bucephalus butted Porus' horse in the forehead and knocked it over. Then Porus fell to the ground and breathed his last. When the Indian army saw that Porus was dead, they started to run away. Alexander's soldiers hunted them down with great ferocity, with the result that they killed 3,000, and captured a great number alive.

172. Burial of Porus

They placed Porus' remains on a golden bier and brought it to the City of the Sun; they covered it with

rich robes and placed on it his royal crown. Queen Klitemnestra let her hair fall down to the ground, tore her precious gown, and with 10,000 noble ladies of India she accompanied the body of Porus with great lamentation and mourning. Alexander also accompanied the procession with his royal escort to the place of burial.

173. Alexander in Porus' palace

Alexander remained in the field for 12 days, and then he approached the City of the Sun, and entered Porus' palace, where he saw such marvellous things that the mind of man cannot reckon them all. The palace was large, and as long as four bowshots; the wall was of gold, the ceiling was of silver, and the pillars of the bed were all of gold, adorned with precious gems and sizeable pearls. On the walls of the palace were depicted the wars of all the kings, and the 12 months in order, portrayed as human figures with beautiful faces. All around the palace there were 100 golden candelabra, every one of them lit constantly. They brought Alexander 100,000 war horses with chain mail, 10,000 lions with which Porus used to go hunting, and 20,000 hunting leopards. The precious crown of Porus was made of gems of haematite and many other fine things. Alexander spent a year there to rest his army from the wars they had fought.

174. Alexander and the Amazons

When the army had rested well, and the year had passed, he set off to visit the Amazons, women who have a kingdom of their own without a king; when he came near to their borders he sent them a letter, as follows.

175. Alexander's letter to the Amazons

‘Alexander the King and Emperor of the whole world, who up to this day has fought so many wars and won them all, without the slightest resistance, to the women of the Amazons, greetings. You have heard that I have annihilated Darius the king of Persia, as well as the terrible Porus of India, and have enslaved many other kings, forcing them all to acknowledge me as their master and to pay me tribute. I wished to come and converse with you, not in order to enslave you but in order to see you, since I hear from many quarters of your martial prowess and of the your excellent government. So be ready to receive me in a fitting manner, and I will do you no harm.’

176. The Amazons' letter to Alexander

‘From the terrible and warlike Amazons, whose name is known throughout the world for bravery, to King

Alexander. We all send word, and beg your majesty not to come to our land, because the land is very bad and will do you harm. We hope that you will turn back without doing anything, because we are located between two rivers, and our island is so large that one could not go round it in a year. No men live on our island; they all dwell on the other side of the river and look after our cattle. Every five years they cross over to us, and any Amazon who wants to have children takes one of them to her house; they live together for a year, and when the year is up the men go back to tending the cattle. If an enemy comes against us we immediately cross the river and engage. Then our men accompany us to look after our tents and to act as our servants. We are exceptionally powerful in war and weaponry, so that no nation has ever been found that can vanquish us, since we deploy an army of more than 800,000 soldiers. You should know, in addition, that any Amazon who is captured in battle is honoured greatly by the others, and any who is killed is worshipped like a god; any who carries out acts of great bravery against the enemy is rewarded with countless gifts and honours. If you have decided to come against us, and you conquer us, we shall not be ashamed, because we are women, and that would be nothing surprising; but if we conquer you, we consider that you will be shamed before the whole world because you have been conquered by women. Think about what we have written and discuss it with your comrades,

so that you don't do anything you may regret later. Then write and tell us what we should send you, so that we can save you the trouble of coming here. Answer this letter quickly, since our armies are standing ready.'

177. Alexander's reply to the Amazons

'King Alexander, Emperor of the whole world, to the Amazon women who think they are so brave, greetings. I have gained the whole world through my own initiative, and it would be a great shame if I were to be frightened of you. I am not considering making war on you: I just wanted to frighten you with my words. I command you to send me tribute, and 1,500 of your most beautiful Amazons, with as many selected horses, which can be changed every year. In addition, send me examples of the things that are found in your country, so long as they are beautiful and precious. But if you do not obey me, I shall come with my whole army and will not leave a single one of you alive.'

178. The Amazons' letter to Alexander

'From the Amazons, terrible and brave and renowned throughout the world, to the famous King Alexander.

We submit to you, and we give you permission to come to our land. We are ready to receive you and are looking forward to it with all our hearts. We promise to give you every year 50 kentenaria of gold, and we send you 1,500 selected Amazons, the bravest we have. We have commanded them that if any of them fornicates she will be disgraced among the others and they will treat her as a sinner. When the year is up, we will send you other ones, and these must return to us. We are ready to do anything you command, and will do so with enthusiasm.'

179. Alexander conquers Bometros

When Alexander saw that the Amazons were going to be sensible, he decided not to go to their country, but turned back; his next expedition was against Bometros the king of Ourmelia. When Bometros heard that Alexander was coming against him, without wasting a moment in discussion, or in seeking advice from anyone, he gathered his army and found that it numbered 800,000 soldiers. He set off against Alexander and sent spies to capture Alexander's sentries whom Seleukos had sent with 1,000 armed troops to hide in a certain place. Bometros set off against Alexander but Seleukos immediately attacked him, destroyed his whole army and brought

him to Alexander, who told them to kill him and all his men.

180. Alexander goes against the Unclean Ones

Then Alexander advanced and entered a rocky land in which there lived 17 tribes of unclean people. Every tribe spoke its own language, and they were called the Unclean languages. They were the Goths, Mangodoi, Anages, Agokoi, Exautheisoι, Anthropophagi, Dog-Heads, Phardeioi, Aleneoi, Physonikaioi, Asineoi, Daraioi, Dephareis, Phytenaioi, Thelmataioi, Marmythai, Agrimantheoι. When they saw Alexander, they fled to the regions of the North. Alexander pursued them to the great mountains of the North. There he found a beautiful land, surrounded by mountains full of caves, into which there was only a single entrance. The nations entered that land, and Alexander decided to shut them in by the only entrance so that they could never enter the Inhabited World again. He ordered his men to build a high bronze gate, and coated it with *Siakenthes*. The property of *Siakenthes* is that iron cannot shatter it nor can fire burn it. They built a high tower, and the carpenters were so many that they built an extraordinary machine on the summit of the tower: whenever the wind blew, it uttered the words 'Alexander the king'. When those who were inside heard these words, they did not dare to come

near the gate; and so they remain closed up there to this day.

181. Alexander visits Candace

Then Alexander set off from there and arrived in the land of the Amastrides, whose ruler was Kondavlouses, the son of the wondrous Candace, who was famed for her bravery and distinction, and for her great wealth. She was a relation of Porus by marriage. She had two sons, Kondavlouses and Doryphoros. Doryphoros was married to a daughter of Porus. When Candace learned that Alexander was approaching her borders, she secretly sent a skilled painter to infiltrate Alexander's army; he made an excellent portrait of Alexander and brought it to the queen. When she saw how handsome he was, she was amazed. She put the picture up in her bedroom and guarded it carefully, because she had heard that Alexander himself went to spy on kingdoms in the guise of a messenger. So she waited for him to come to her too, so that she could capture him. When Kondavlouses saw Alexander entering his lands he was very afraid. He took his soldiers, his wife, his daughter and all his possessions and ran to his mother Candace to take refuge in her palace. But on the road, Evagrithes the king of the Oularioi was waiting for him; he attacked and fought him, defeated him and captured his wife, his daughter and all his

possessions; Kondavlouses himself only escaped with difficulty from his clutches.

182. Alexander captures Kondavlouses

While Kondavlouses was fleeing towards his mother Candace, he came upon Alexander's sentries; they captured him and asked him who he was and where he had come from. He told them the whole truth and they brought him to Alexander. When the latter heard that Kondavlouses had been captured, he placed Antiochos on the royal throne, while Alexander stood by, pretending to be Antiochos. Antiochos ordered Kondavlouses to be brought before him. Alexander himself went and brought him to Antiochos, and paid homage to him. Antiochos questioned him in detail about where he had come from, why he was fleeing, and how he had fallen into their hands. He replied, thinking that this was Alexander himself, and said 'I was running from fear of you, King Alexander. I was running from the land of the Amastrides to my mother Candace, for protection; but Evagrites the king of Oularia rose up and crushed me, took my wife and my daughter and all my possessions, and I alone escaped. In my flight I fell upon your sentry post: so I was just like the man who runs from a lion which is about to eat him, climbs a high tree and the lion settles down by the root of the tree, which is on the edge of a lake. For

fear that the lion may see him, he gazes up into the top of the tree and sees a big snake sliding down towards him. So he turns to the shore of the lake, but there he sees a crocodile, with its jaws wide open ready to swallow him. Then he says to himself: "What am I to do in this unhappy situation? If I climb down to the ground, the lion will eat me alive; if I stay in the tree, the snake will swallow me bit by bit. It will be better to jump into the lake, and be eaten by the crocodile in a single gulp, rather than be tortured alive." So he jumps into the lake and is eaten by the crocodile. Such is my situation, Alexander: I fled from your army and have fallen straight into your clutches.' Antiochos said to him 'Unfortunate men undergo many dangers. When you heard that I was coming, why did you not come to me as was proper, but instead ran away? But since you have fallen into my hands, because of my love of the all-powerful God, I will rescue your wife and daughter and all your possessions, and bring you with honours to your mother.'

183. Alexander's command

Antiochos said out loud to Alexander 'Antiochos, take Kondavlouses and march against Evagrithes the king of Oularia; if he surrenders the property of Kondavlouses peacefully, let him come here together with you, and have no fear; but if he tries any tricks, go and ravage

his whole land and bring him here to me in chains, so that I can send him to Candace along with Kondavlouses.’ When Kondavlouses heard these words he was very pleased, paid homage to Antiochos as king, and said ‘Most high king, it is because of your kindness to the unfortunate that God has protected you and made you king of all the World.’ Then Alexander paid homage to Antiochos as king, took Kondavlouses and a select troop of 800,000 soldiers besides, and marched against Evagrithes. On the way, Alexander asked Kondavlouses ‘If I rescue your wife, your daughter and your country, what favour will you do me?’ He replied ‘All my life is yours, and when we return to the King I will ask him to send you as envoy to my mother Candace. You will receive many things from us and will become my mother’s third son – for I have another brother named Doryphoros – and we shall all be brothers in heart.’ Then he led his army against Evagrithes, divided it into three parts, and sent 200,000 men to ravage the land of Evagrithes, hid 300,000 in a ravine, and sent the other 300,000 against Evagrithes’ city. In the end they captured a gentleman from the city and gave him a letter which read as follows.

184. Alexander’s letter to Evagrithes

‘Alexander the King of Kings and ruler of the whole Inhabited World, to Evagrithes the king of Oularia.

I have heard of your crimes and your arrogance, and am disgusted. I am sending you Antiochos with orders that you send me tribute and gifts. You are to return Kondavlouses' wife and daughter and all his property. If you do not listen to me, you will meet a hideous death. Consider well what I have written to you, while you still have time, because if you do not bow to my desire, you will soon have to change your mind.'

185. Alexander defeats Evagrites

Evagrites sent spies to Alexander; they observed that his army was small, and when Evagrites heard that he was emboldened to fight. But immediately Alexander brought his second army out of the ravine and destroyed Evagrites' entire army; the latter, out of fear of Alexander, killed himself and expired at once. Alexander went to the city and took command of it; he retrieved Kondavlouses' wife and daughter and all his property. Then he went to Antiochos, who was sitting on the throne of Alexander, and paid homage to him as king. Antiochos asked Kondavlouses 'How much did Evagrites take from you, which you have now recovered?' He said 'By your power, mighty king, I have got them all back and even more; but please grant me this request, that Antiochos should go with me to my mother as a messenger, since I have seen how brave he is and skilled in battle.'

186. Kondavlouses returns to Candace

Antiochos ordered Alexander to go as emissary to Candace. The two men paid homage and set off to see the queen. As they chatted along the way, Kondavlouses said 'I have never had the good fortune to meet a cleverer or braver man in all the Inhabited World. It is just that Alexander should be king of all the Inhabited World, since he has such men under him.' Alexander, in order to divine what his feelings were towards him, replied as follows: 'Trust me, brother Kondavlouses, there are many men close to Alexander who are better than I am. First there is Philones, an older man, then Philip, Seleukos, Ptolemy, Antigonos and after all these there is me, Antiochos.' Kondavlouses said 'I saw all those too, but I hold you for a better man than any of them. Truly you are worthy to be king of the whole world. I have conceived such a love for you, master Antiochos, that I would give my life for love of you.'

187. Alexander in the cave

Continuing on their way, they came to a large cave, and Kondavlouses said to Alexander 'Noble Antiochos, in this cave they say that the gods of the pagan Greeks remain, still alive, and if anyone goes inside, he will see amazing things; but many have gone in and lost

their wits, and become mad.’ Alexander replied, ‘Do you have such love for me, that you are forcing me to go and lose my wits?’ Kondavlouses replied, ‘I did not say this to do you harm; if you go into the cave, no harm will come to you, because your mind is great, the fortune of your lord is on your side, and both gods and demons lend assistance to the fortunate.’ Alexander said, ‘Show me the way into the cave.’ Then Kondavlouses showed him the way, but he took him by the wrist and would not let him lead the way, saying ‘There is fear within, and many ghosts; if any evil should befall you, what will become of me for love of you? The eyes of Alexander, who loves you so much, will not see you again.’ Alexander said to him, ‘Wait a little while I follow the fortune of Alexander, and God will help me.’ So he went in, fully armed, and saw strange things. Shadowy faces loomed up and came to greet him. But he, calling on God the all-powerful, went on in without any fear. He recognised Kronos, and Zeus, and Hermes, the gods of the pagan Greeks, bound in chains. One of the bound kings responded to him, ‘King Alexander, these whom you see were also kings, rulers of all the world, just as you are today, but because of their pride and their boundless arrogance which made them think themselves equal to God, he became angry at them and sent them here to this cave to be punished together with their souls, before throwing them into Tartaros where they will be punished for eternity.’ Alexander asked him what

were the flitting human faces. He replied, 'These are the kings who showed no mercy, who did many evil deeds, and trusted in those who are bound here in the chains which bound them to the gods while they were alive.' Alexander said, 'It seems to me, sir, that I have seen you before.' The other replied, 'When you made your expedition against the wild men, you saw my face engraved on a pillar.' Alexander asked, 'What is your name?' he replied, 'I am King Sonsochos, who at that time conquered the whole world. In my pride I advanced to the edge of the earth, and wished to travel on to Paradise, but the wild men came upon me and killed me along with my entire army; then the demons brought me here to be punished for my ignorance. Take care, Alexander, not to become too proud, or you too will be brought here in chains.' Then Alexander went on his way into the cave, and came upon his father-in-law Darius, the king of Persia. Darius saw him and wept and groaned and cried out, saying, 'O Alexander, you who are so clever, have you too been shut up down here with us?' Alexander replied, 'I have not come to join you, I have just made an expedition and come for a visit.' Darius said, 'Alexander, you who are so clever, since you have with you the God of Heaven and Earth, and he is your helper, you will learn something else that you did not know: come close and I will tell you.' He went up to him and said, 'This Queen Candace whom you are attacking, she has had a painting made of you, and

she is going to recognise you; but hurry along, don't delay, and the God whom you worship will rescue you from her clutches.' Darius wept again and said, 'Alexander my son, what state is the Persian Empire in, and how are things with my sweetest daughter Roxandra?' Alexander said, 'Your daughter is today the ruler of the world along with me.' Darius said, 'Go further in and you will see Porus the king of India.' When Alexander saw him he said, 'Most noble Porus, once you were called a god on Earth, and now are you being punished like an unfortunate mortal?' Porus said, 'Those who ruled the world with arrogance are punished in such a way. Guard against arrogance, or the demons will bring you too here in chains.' Alexander said, 'Surely it seems that everyone receives his reward according to his deeds.'

188. Alexander leaves the cave

Immediately he left the darkness of the cave, and found Kondavlouses weeping and lamenting at Alexander's delay. When he saw him, he ran and embraced him, saying 'What kept you so long, master Antiochos; I was so frightened because I thought you had vanished. Truly today I have seen the fortune of Alexander, since you have come unharmed out of the cave. I beg you, tell me what you saw inside, so I can tell the rest of the

world.' Then Alexander told him in detail what he had seen and heard, and Kondavlouses was wonder-struck on hearing it all.

On the way Alexander scrutinised the produce of the mountains through which they were passing, and was very impressed. The olives were as fat as lemons, the walnuts were the size of melons, the pears were as big as marrows. The apples and lemons, similarly, were like nosebags. Eventually they reached the palace of Candace who was delighted when she learned that her son was still alive and was at her gate; for she had thought that he must have been destroyed by Alexander, and had been lamenting his death, since she loved him so much. So she went with all speed and met them when they were still far off.

189. Candace meets Alexander

When Kondavlouses saw his mother, he dismounted, took Alexander by the hand, and said 'Mother, please welcome my brother Antiochos the voivode of Alexander: greet him even before you greet me.' She kissed them both and was delighted to see them. She began to ask her son what had happened to him, and he described the dangers he had been through, as follows: 'This voivode of Alexander granted me my life, and all the troubles that beset me he turned into

rejoicing. Evagrites had captured my wife and daughter and all my possessions, but he has restored them all to me twofold. So please welcome him as third son.’ When Candace heard her son’s words, she embraced Alexander, kissed him and said kindly to him ‘You are welcome here, Antiochos, great voivode of King Alexander, and today I adopt you as my third son, because you have done such great favours to my son, your brother.’ Alexander got up, still in disguise as the messenger, and paid homage to Candace, and they started to converse. Then the queen noticed the distinguishing marks on his face, and said to herself ‘Surely this is Alexander of Macedon himself?’ She embraced him, kissed him sweetly and said ‘Antiochos, come into my palace and see my treasure, and take anything you fancy from it; I will write a letter for you to take to Alexander.’

190. Candace recognises Alexander

She took him by the hand, went into the palace, and showed him many wonders and strange things – pearls, numberless precious stones, and a great deal of gold. She took him on a tour of the whole palace, even into her bedroom, and said to him ‘Take whatever you like from what you have seen, my son Alexander.’ Alexander replied ‘I am Antiochos, the trusted servant of Alexander. Why do you call me Alexander?’

The queen replied 'I know that you are Alexander. Even if you have changed your name, you are still the same man. If you don't believe me, look at the face of the image above your head, and see whose face it resembles.' Alexander looked at the portrait and observed that it had all his own features. 'In truth,' he said, 'it is a beautiful painting; but it is because I resemble Alexander that he loves me so much. Many rulers pay homage to me in the belief that I am Alexander.'

191. Alexander is frightened

Candace replied 'Today I have become queen of the whole world, because I have the king of the Inhabited World in my power. So you must know, Alexander, that you have fallen into my hands just as I desired, and you have no way of escape.' When Alexander heard this, his expression changed totally, his teeth began to chatter as if he had caught a cold, and he looked wildly about him. He thought of killing the queen right there in her chamber, so that he could run out and get on his horse and escape, or be killed, rather than be shamed by being murdered inside the palace like a woman. The queen saw how his expression changed, and was frightened. She went to the door and made to leave; but Alexander took her by the hand and said 'Don't go outside, or you will die a hideous death here. Then

I shall go outside and kill your son too, and die with honour on my own sword.' When the queen heard this speech of Alexander's, she went up to him, took him by the hand and kissed him gently, and said 'Alexander my son, king of the whole world, do not get it into your head that you are going to suffer any harm at my hands, because I don't agree with the opinion of my son or anyone else; instead I am going to send you back to your army with great honour and plentiful gifts. I am not a mere ignorant woman, that I should kill such a king. I am going to protect you and honour you and treat you for ever as my son. What sort of man would he be who would want to kill the king of the whole world? Because of you the whole world is at peace today, and who could cut off the heads of all the world? Yet you think I am stupid, like a common woman, and are afraid that I am going to kill you. Your death would overturn all the kings and rulers from East to West. The whole world is not worth a single hair of your head. I would love to have you as my son, Alexander, and to be called queen of the whole world. Be assured, Alexander, that I shall advise you as a loving mother, and do not be upset. I insist that from today you shall be my spy and messenger, because it is not right that the head of your kingdom should hang by a single hair, and that you should lose honour. Listen to this great oath I swear: from now on and for ever you need have no fear of me, but will receive only kindness from me.'

192. Alexander is relieved

When Alexander heard the queen's words, his heart was soothed, he paid homage to her and said 'From today I shall regard you as a substitute for my mother Olympias.' The queen embraced him, kissed him again and took him by the hand; then they both went out.

193. Doryphoros' hatred for Alexander

Just at that time the queen's son Doryphoros arrived, exhausted from his encounter with Alexander's sentries; he had escaped them with difficulty, but had lost all his troops. He had learned that Antiochos had come as a messenger to his mother, and had decided to kill him. His mother the queen discovered his intention; she was afraid and came to meet him in the hall of the palace, saying 'You must not do such a thing, my son, because Alexander saved your brother from great danger, and freed his wife, his daughter and all his possessions from captivity, and sent them back to us unharmed with his beloved messenger. So we must treat him as a friend and master, and give him gifts from our own store, and honour him greatly because of his great kindness to us. Are you going to kill his beloved Antiochos? No way! Do not do this, my son; it would be better that we should all die than that the messenger of Alexander should meet his doom under

our roof.' Doryphoros said 'Let me go, mother, and kill one of Alexander's men, who has killed many thousands of my people, including my father-in-law Porus the king of India: my wife is weeping day and night over his death. Believe me, Antiochos's life is at an end.' When the wife of Kondavlouses heard these words she ran and said to her husband 'You must know that your brother Doryphoros is planning to kill your dear friend Antiochos.' When Kondavlouses heard that, he ran to his mother's palace, found Doryphoros with his sword already drawn, and his mother hanging on to him around the middle, struggling to prevent him killing Alexander. As soon as Kondavlouses arrived, he grabbed the sword from his brother's hand and began to attack him and to call him all kinds of names. The queen slipped into the palace and fetched Alexander. When Doryphoros saw him, he rushed at him with his knife to kill him; but Alexander drew his sword and said 'Doryphoros, my death will surely be your death too, and that of all your race; for the death of Macedonians is not like your deaths. If you kill me, you will do little harm to Alexander, but when he comes to look for me, you will find no place to hide. You know very well how many kings and rulers he has overthrown up to this day. If my master Alexander had known that Queen Candace kills his messengers, he would not have sent me, but would have come himself with his army.' Candace looked at Alexander and said with a laugh 'The clever man conceals his ideas in his

heart; he drives away fear with his bravery, and thus is saved.'

194. Doryphoros makes up with Alexander

When Doryphoros heard these words he was afraid; but Candace and Kondavlouses brought Alexander to make up with Doryphoros, and they established great friendship between them. Queen Candace secretly gave Alexander her large crown, which was adorned with precious stones and pearls, and said 'Give this on my behalf to your wife, my daughter, Roxandra.' She also gave him her ring, which was skilfully worked with four gems surrounded by a magnet. She also gave him armour of Hyacinthian iron, the pieces of which were hinged with snakeskin. She also gave him a white Arab horse with complete armour and a golden saddle. Then she gave him a wonderful helmet fashioned to look like an eagle, with the following inscription on its rim: 'Alexander the king of the world, great emperor and Caesar, king of the East and the West.'

195. Candace's speech to Alexander

Candace gave Alexander the following advice: 'Never be anybody's spy, my son, and from today onwards never trust anybody, or you will come down with a

bump.’ She gave him ten years’ tribute, but he did not want to accept it, and said ‘I shall summon Alexander and he will remit it to you.’ The queen whispered to him ‘If you leave now, they will recognize you; just take it, and keep us in your heart.’ She kissed him again, burst into tears and said ‘I was pleased, Alexander, to have you as my son, so that I could be queen of the world through you.’ She sent him away with great honour, accompanied by her two sons, and they went to his lodging. The sentries were waiting for him, and when they saw him, they dismounted and paid homage.

196. Alexander returns to his army

Then Alexander turned and said to Kondavlouses and Doryphoros ‘You ought to know that I am Alexander.’ When they heard that they froze like corpses, and said ‘If you are Alexander, then we are dead men.’ But Alexander said ‘Don’t be afraid. I shall not forget the honour your mother has done me, and the love she has shown me. From today onwards you will be like dear brothers to me.’ He gave them many gifts and sent them away with honour back to their mother. Ptolemy, Philones and Antiochos began to speak to him: ‘King Alexander, why do you put your own life in danger and run the risk of turning the world upside down? If you put yourself in danger of an evil death,

you will leave all of us to be annihilated in a strange land. We beg your majesty not to do anything like this again. We have taken the whole world and there is no other land left for us; but if you give us the order, let us go to Persia.’ When Alexander heard this speech, he thought sensibly about it and gave his army the order to get on the march and set off for Persia.

197. He goes into the sea

On the march towards Persia they came to a beach, and Alexander decided to go down into the sea to see what was in its depths. He immediately ordered Antiochos to go to a city which was close by, to order the construction of a glass container. When Antiochos had brought the container, Alexander boarded a ship with a number of his nobles and they went out to sea. There, Alexander got into the glass container and ordered them to let him down into the sea on ropes: ‘When I tug on the ropes, pull me up again.’ So they let him down into the sea and he went right to the bottom. There he saw a huge fish, which he caught and stopped to examine it; but 24 hours passed and he still had not seen its tail go by: he was amazed. He saw the battles that the fish fought between each other, and how they struck each other with their tails. He said to himself ‘See how the fish fight battles just like human beings.’ At that moment a fish like an enormous

buffalo came along, which banged into the container and caused the rope to jerk.

198. He emerges from the sea

When the people in the boat felt the tug on the ropes, they pulled him up right away, and helped him out of the container. Alexander was very annoyed that they had not allowed him to watch the battle of the fishes, and upbraided them, and told them to set sail so that they could return to the army. When they arrived, he described to them all what he had seen in the depths of the sea.

199. He returns to Persia

Then he set off with his army and arrived back in Persia, where Roxandra welcomed him with great honours. Alexander swore eternal friendship with his army and gave them generous gifts. He spent a year enjoying himself with Roxandra, and then he set off with his household and his army to go to Babylon.

200. A vision concerning his death

In his first lodging on the road to Babylon, Alexander had a dream of the prophet Jeremiah, who said to him

‘Prepare yourself, Alexander, to go to the place that has been prepared for you, for the days of your life have been fulfilled, and you will soon be murdered by your friends. Go to Babylon with your army to put your kingdom in order.’ When the Prophet Jeremiah had uttered these words, he disappeared.

201. Dawn, and Alexander’s advice

When Alexander awoke, he sat bolt upright, there on the bed, because of the vision he had seen. He wept and wailed, and passed the rest of the night in an inconsolable condition. When day came, he mounted his horse and rode out. In the army there was perhaps one man who had a reason to take his life. He arrived at a wonderful plain called Afsitida, the dwelling place of Job the just man, and ordered the whole army to camp there. When the nobles saw how depressed Alexander was, they tried to cheer him up. They stationed the army, in full armour, on a high mountain in the middle of the plain, and said to Alexander ‘Most high king, what is it that afflicts you so badly? See how many men you have accompanying you: you are lord of them all and king of the whole world. Therefore you ought to be cheerful, and the whole people would rejoice with you.’ Alexander cheered up a little as a result of the army’s games, and later on he returned and entered Babylon.

202. Alexander sees Aristotle

The next day, Alexander had a series of friendly meetings with the kings and lords who were with him, and with all his troops. They came from the lands of the East and the West, from the regions of the North and the South, and from the islands in the sea, all of them bringing many years' worth of tribute, and generous gifts. Aristotle his teacher also arrived, who had been sent by his mother Olympias. When Alexander saw his teacher, he was delighted, kissed him and said 'Welcome, most precious master, who shines like the sun in the midst of the Greeks. Tell me, dear teacher, how is the West? How is that distant world? Is everything well in the kingdom of Macedonia? How is my mother? What are they saying about me in your world? I went to the end of the world and came very close to Paradise. I saw the Blessed Ones, whom you had told me of, when I crossed to their island, and Evaenthes their king told me that the gods of Greece are not to be found there, but are being punished below the earth in Hades.' When Aristotle heard that, he trembled and said 'I thank the gods that I have heard your sweet voice, king of the World. All the Inhabited World rejoices, and is at peace because of you. Your mother is delighted to hear of your deeds of valour, and of your good health, and is reigning peacefully in Macedonia. She is very eager to see you, and your bride

Roxandra.’ When Alexander heard how his mother was missing him, he burst into bitter tears. He took Aristotle by the hand and they sat down to dinner. The nobles all sat in their proper order at the table with Alexander.

203. The gifts that Aristotle brought

Alexander’s mother Olympias sent a large and valuable crown for Queen Roxandra, and another crown for Alexander, as well as two robes, for Alexander and Roxandra, embroidered with gold and pearls; two white stallions with golden saddles; another hundred selected horses; two rings adorned with priceless gems; and a letter which read as follows.

204. Olympias’ letter to Alexander

‘From Olympias the Queen, to my sweetest son Alexander, greetings. You must know that, since I departed from your majesty in Macedonia, my heart has known no joy but constant sorrow. Neither my kingdom nor my power delight me, because you are not with me and I do not see you. I beg your majesty, either come here or command me to come to you; if I don’t see you, I am going to die of grief.’

205. Alexander gives gifts to his companions

Aristotle read out the letter while Alexander sat on his throne, which was 12 feet high, and had belonged to Porus the king of India. When Alexander and his friends heard the letter, they started to weep, both great and small. The same day, a man stole a golden jug that belonged to Alexander. They told Alexander, who responded 'Wherever this jug appears, if anybody sees it, let him tell me, because it belongs to Alexander, not to the one who is carrying it.' Aristotle came close to him and said 'I am amazed at the deeds of valour you have performed, the like of which have never been seen nor ever will be seen in the whole world.' Alexander said 'There are four virtues in my opinion: first, to welcome friends warmly; secondly, truth; thirdly, never to depart from my promise; and fourthly, to give good judgement, and to believe in the God of Heaven and Earth, who created all things.'

206. Sayings of Alexander

Aristotle asked Alexander in addition where the gold and treasure was that he had taken from the whole world. Alexander looked at the commanders who were there and told him 'My beloved companions and the people are my gold and my treasure.' Aristotle said 'My lord, you should sire a child.' Alexander

said 'I shall not send a child to you in Macedonia, but I will send you great honour and glory, so that you will be the chiefs in the kingdoms of the world until the day that I die; and you will remember me all your lives because of the good things I have done for you.' At that moment Alexander saw an aged Persian noble, who had made up his cheeks to look like a young man, and said to him 'My dear Melykrasyros, if making up your cheeks had been a good thing to do, I would have recommended it, but why you have used make-up when it is useless?' With these words Alexander burst out laughing. There was another man there also named Alexander, a very big man but very timid, who ran away in every battle. Alexander said to him 'Fellow, you ought to be ashamed to bear such a name and yet run away in battle. Either imitate Alexander or change your name.' When they heard this, the nobles burst out laughing too. On another occasion they brought Alexander 3,000 bandits who had been terrorising the world, and said to Alexander 'Give the order, and we will hang them.' Alexander replied, 'Now that they have laid eyes on me, none of them is to die. It is given to judges to destroy men, and to kings to have mercy and show kindness.' He ordered them all to be freed, and made them his own scouts. The same day they brought him a man from India, saying that he was such a fine archer that he could shoot an arrow through a finger ring. Alexander ordered him to shoot; but he did not want to pick up his bow. Alexander was angry

and ordered him to be hanged. Those who dragged him away asked him 'Why do you throw away your life over a single bowshot?' He said 'It is ten days since I last fired my bow, and so I was nervous in front of the king, in case I might miss.' When Alexander heard that, he freed him and held him in great honour. Then again a poor man came up to Alexander and said 'Your highness, I have a daughter, my only child, and I have nothing to provide for her dowry. Help me if you will.' Alexander ordered him to be given 1,000 talents. The poor man said 'You have given me too much.' Alexander replied 'A king's gifts should be suitable to a king.' After this he called his teacher Aristotle and gave him gifts, including the crown and cloak of King Porus, 10,000 talents of gold and 30,000 containers of pearls. He sent him back to Macedonia and gave him a letter for Olympias, as well as countless gifts for her.

207. Alexander discovers a treasure

So Aristotle departed for Macedonia, while Alexander remained in Babylon with Roxandra, and with all his army, to whom he allowed some time for recuperation. He forgot about his fear of death and was completely cheerful for three months. During that time a man came and said to him 'I was hunting on the banks of the River Tigris and I found a lot of gold; if

you will, come and see it.' Alexander laughed and said 'All gold is in the hands of God. If he had wanted to give me gold he would have given it to me; but now it is yours for the taking.' The other replied 'I took as much as I wanted, and would like your Majesty to have the rest, because there is an enormous quantity of gold.' When Alexander heard that he mounted his horse and went off to inspect the treasure. When he saw it he was amazed at its quantity, and instructed his army to gather it up and share it out.

208. Alexander is poisoned

One day two brothers came to Alexander, one of them named Leukodouses and the other Bryonouses, and asked him to give them leave to go and visit their mother. Alexander was very fond of them, because he had known them from childhood and had brought them up, and never let them out of his sight. It was many years since they had seen their mother, and she had often sent word asking them to visit her; but because Alexander would not let them leave, they had been unable to go.

[When their mother saw that Alexander, because of his love for them, would not let them go, she thought up a wicked plan and devised a foul and inhuman deed. The accursed woman made up a poisoned sweetmeat,

placed it in a vessel, and sent it to her sons with a letter, as follows:

The wicked woman's letter to her sons

'To my beloved sons Leukadouses and Bryonouses, greetings from your beloved mother. You know, my darling children, how many times I have written to ask you to visit me, but you say that you cannot get away because of Alexander's intense love for you. Now I swear an oath by the milk with which I suckled you, you are going to come and see me. If Alexander does not let you go, I will give you a sweetmeat for him to eat, and in the hour in which he eats it, he will allow you to come to visit me.'

When he saw and read the letter, Leukadouses was angry with his mother. But Bryonouses took the poison and hid it carefully. Leukadouses said to him 'Carry on then; this is a bad thing you are going to do.' (Veloudis)]

Leukadouses was stablemaster of Alexander's horses, and Bryonouses was his wine butler, who mixed Alexander's drinks. As soon as Bryonouses received the letter from his mother, in which she begged him to come for a visit with his brother, the wicked Devil entered into him, and he decided to make this an occasion to poison the king; another reason for this was that not long before, Alexander had beaten him over the head with a log because he had broken a valuable cup while he was stirring it. There was also another man with a grievance against Alexander named Medes,

and the two of them plotted together to poison him. Then a number of their friends among the commanders joined them, and they all made an agreement, swearing a terrible oath, not to deflect from their declared purpose. Only five were left out of the conspiracy: Perdiccas, Ptolemy, Olbios, Lysimachos and Philones. They could not win them over because of their loyalty to Alexander; but the rest were all traitors, and set about finding a suitable moment to carry out their plan. The reason why all these friends conspired to poison him was as follows: they realised that, as long as Alexander was alive, they would not become rulers themselves, and so they would die without ever getting their reward. But they believed that if he thought he was going to die, he would share out the empire among them so they would all benefit and get what they wanted. That was how the plot arose against such a wonderful king, which led to his death not at the hands of his enemies, but of his own friends. Many such friends are found today, who openly display love of every kind to a man's face, and honour him, but in secret slander him; when they can they do him down, they betray him and punish him, and put up with all kinds of things to dishonour him. Such friends are like the traitor Judas, and will suffer the same fate.

One day Alexander had a big party and invited all his friends and commanders, the masters of horse, the chiefs of the army and his bravest soldiers. When they had all assembled and sat at the table, they started to

be very lively and to enjoy themselves, singing songs and praising Alexander. Alexander was equally merry, seeing how much they were all enjoying themselves, and said to them 'My dear commanders, today I want you to enjoy yourselves even more than usual.' With these words he retired, went to his room and sat on his bed, considering in what way he could honour his friends even more than usual. Then those cursed ones, one after the other, saw an opportunity to poison him. They told Bryonouses to prepare the poison, so that they could give it to him in his wine while he was making merry; and they sent Medes to ask Alexander to come out of his room. Medes went and said to him 'Your majesty, your loyal friends would like you to come out so that they can see you celebrating with them.' Alexander came at once and took his place at table to join in the celebrations. Then his corrupt friends invited him to take a drink, giving the nod to Bryonouses to tip in the poison. The evil Bryonouses was ready for his crime, poured it straight into the cup and mixed it in.

209. Alexander is in pain from the poison

When Alexander had drunk the poison, some time went by before it took effect. He got up and went all round the table, looking gaily at all his friends as they drank, and encouraging them to enjoy themselves. As

he stood there, pain began to envelop his heart, and he cried out ‘My friends, what is this terrible pain in my heart, which is racking my innards, as if someone had plunged a double-edged sword into my heart? I can’t keep going; I will go to my room and wait till it passes over, and then return.’ He went to his room and called for his doctor, Philip. The latter immediately realised that Alexander had been poisoned, and gave him a herb to make him vomit. He realised too that the poison had been given in the wine, and said ‘Your majesty, I can do nothing to help you. The poison was very strong and has permeated your whole body. The only thing I can do is to keep you alive for three days, so that you can put your kingdom in order and write your will.’

210. Alexander’s lament

When Alexander heard the doctor’s words, he shook his head and said ‘O vain and deceitful world, what a brief time my unfortunate glory has lasted. It is every man’s fate to be beautiful and live in honour for a short time, but it can be lost in a single hour. Truly says the proverb, There is no joy that is not mixed with grief, nor is there any great glory on earth that does not quickly fall to ruin. O Earth, Heaven, Mountains and Hills and Plains, weep for me today, because I spent such a short time in the world enjoying honour,

glory and happiness. Now I must go below the earth, like every mortal man. O Earth my mother, you who now are taking me away, how kind you were in the beginning, yet suddenly you ravish men to your arms. My beloved and brave Macedonians, if only it were possible for you to seize me from the arms of death. Do your best to save me from losing my precious life, and I will be your slave and give you the control of my kingdom.'

211. The Macedonians mourn

When the Macedonians heard Alexander's words, they wept copiously, and there was a great commotion throughout the army from their weeping and their cries, as they all turned their steps towards him. When they saw him, their weeping and sighing and groaning became even more violent. Then Philip the doctor hustled Alexander inside to put his kingdom in order and to write his will. So he sent for a scribe and wrote it: then he read it out in public for all to hear.

212. Alexander's will

'Alexander the King, and Emperor of the whole world, son of the wondrous Philip and of Olympias – I see that death has cornered me and will separate me from my

sweet life, since there is no one who can escape him and he has no fear of kings, no shame before rulers, he does not pity the young but treats everyone the same. Therefore I am writing my will. First of all I request love, forgiveness and sympathy for all that I have done. Now, in order that there shall be no strife or fighting among my generals and commanders, I bequeath my kingdom of Macedonia to Perdikkas to rule; he is to regard my mother Olympias as his own mother, and she is to regard him as her son. He is to take my beloved wife Roxandra and bring her to Macedonia to live near my mother; and if she gives birth – since she is pregnant – the child is to be called Alexander and will have the right to succeed as king; if the child is female, they are to take the responsibility for her marriage. Next, I leave to Ptolemy the whole of Egypt and Alexandria, to Seleukos Persia and Babylon, to Antigonos Cilicia, to Philon Media, to Python Phrygia and Lydia, to Meleager Pamphylia, to Eumenios Cappadocia, to Cassander Lycia and the Hellespont, to Basimachos Thrace, to Antipater the Pontic kingdom, to Oxyrates Bactriana, to Philip India, to Phrataphernes Parthia and Hyrcania, and to Oblios Persia and Mesopotamia. In all these lands that I bequeath to you, I charge you to protect the rule of law, to show charity to the poor, not to be greedy or to commit injustice, because you too will die and gain nothing from such behaviour, just as I do today. In addition I bequeath 100 chests of florins to divide among the poor, widows and

orphans. If a soldier is in poverty, go to where he is and give him money and endow him with the means to travel to his home, wherever he wishes. In addition I command that when my soul leaves my body and leaves me naked, obtain a chest of solid gold and place me therein. By Heaven, for me for whom the whole world was not sufficient, now you can content me with a six-foot chest. When you have placed me in it, bring me to the city of Alexandria which I founded.'

213. Alexander's lament

When Alexander saw that he was on the point of death, he called all his chiefs and the commanders of the army. He kissed them one by one and bade them farewell with the following words: 'My beloved lords, commanders, cavalry chiefs and other Macedonians, you know well that we have traversed the whole Inhabited World, and come close to Paradise and to the end of the Earth. We also descended into the sea, observed and enumerated everything and did such deeds as made us seem immortal, but gave no thought to death. But behold, now I am dying and there is none of the things I have achieved that I can take with me; I am bound for Hades, where dwell all the men who have died since the beginning of the world. I commend to you health, charity, concord and justice, that you may rule the

world. Your eyes will never behold another Alexander. Please now bring me my horse Bucephalus so that I may say farewell to him.'

They brought him straightaway, and when he saw his master Alexander on the point of death, he began to weep like a human being, groaning and sobbing dreadfully. He went up close to Alexander and kissed him; no one dared to touch him, because if anyone came near him, he began to kick out and become enraged. Alexander stroked his ear and spoke softly to him: 'My beloved horse, after today no Alexander will ever ride you again.'

214. The death of Alexander's murderer

Bryonouses the murderer was standing nearby in chains. Alexander addressed him: 'Do you not remember how I raised you up, did good things for you and paid you honours? So why did you give me that fatal poison, why did you ruin your brother, and me, and showed me no pity? You shall drink of the cup you mixed for me before I die.' When Bucephalus realised that Bryonouses was the murderer, he leapt upon him, seized him in his teeth by the throat, trampled him with his hooves and tore him to pieces. Then Ptolemy gave the order for the dogs to be set to devour his corpse. Meanwhile they brought the horse back to his stable. At that moment they all saw a star descend from the

sky and plunge into the depths of the sea, accompanied by an eagle. When the star reached the sea, the brave and just Alexander breathed his last. There was great lamentation that day, and the whole army was in tears, because there had never been another man like him in all the world.

215. The death of Bucephalus

The groom who had led Bucephalus back to his stable said to him ‘Bucephalus, you are still alive though your master who used to ride you is dead; your glory is over.’ The horse responded to his words as if he were a thinking creature; he whinnied and then roared like a lion, and died on the spot in his stable. Everyone there was amazed at the love shown by this animal, who died of grief for his master.

216. Roxandra’s lament

Alexander’s wife Roxandra remained standing by the corpse of her beloved husband, tearing her precious clothes and her trailing hair; she wept bitterly and addressed him as if he were still alive: ‘Alexander my love, what is this evil you have done me, to leave me all alone, wretched and pitiful as I am? What can I do but tell you the mysteries of my heart? Who could endure

being parted from you? O Heaven and Earth, Sun and Moon, Mountains and Plains, Lords old and young, and every man, weep for me today, because I have been robbed of such a king. Escort me to a foreign land, because my cup is overfull with bitterness; I cannot bear this life after the terrible misfortune that has befallen me.'

217. Roxandra dies of grief

Roxandra turned to the lords and said 'My lords, please withdraw for a time; I fear my heart is going to break.' The lords withdrew. When Roxandra was left alone, she kissed Alexander three times and said 'I can no longer endure your death, my beloved Alexander; I would rather die today with you than live without your presence, my king.' Then she drew his dagger from his belt and plunged it into her heart; she died instantly.

218. The burial of Alexander and Roxandra

When the lords came back in and found the bleeding body of Roxandra, they grieved for her. Then Ptolemy and Philon gave orders to prepare two golden chests; they placed the bodies in them and brought them to Alexandria, the city that Alexander had founded. They built two tall columns and placed the golden coffins

on top of them. The lords bade them farewell with weeping and wailing; then they separated, and each one in turn went to the kingdom that Alexander had allotted to him in his will. Alexander died at the age of 33 years, and had been king for only 18 years. He was blessed with every good quality – courage, beauty, wisdom, mercy, justice and gentleness.

219. The moral of the story

See before your eyes, O man, a valuable example. Consider the death of Alexander and his mortality, reflect that this life is like the lily of the meadow, which is either cut down by the sickle, or the sun withers and destroys it so that in a short time it has vanished. Such is our life: today we are in the world, with riches, with honours and glory, tomorrow we are reaped with the sickle of death. What benefit did Alexander get from his deeds of valour, the places he plundered, the uncounted wealth he amassed? When death came, he forgot them all, he abandoned them all, and he showed no more ambition for them, because he had seen that none of them was enough to escape the sickle of bitter death. Even he bent his head, before whom the kings of the world had bowed down. A little grave sufficed him whom the entire world had not sufficed to satisfy his ambition. Death makes no distinction between king and subject, between rich and poor, between young

and old, but takes them all and spares no one. At that hour, none of us will be able to take with us what we have acquired in this world, but only our soul will keep its acquisitions, whether good or bad. Therefore we should take thought only for the soul, deck it out with good and Christian deeds, with fear of God, with mercy, with sympathy for our brothers. Through this means it will reap its rich reward of eternal life; but as for the things of the body, let us not hope for any help from them, because they are all vain. As Solomon said, 'Vanity of vanities, all is vanity'.

The End

Notes

Introduction

1. Trumpf 1967, 3 cites George Seferis for his lifelong pre-occupation with these figures.
2. Gleixner 1961, 103f.
3. Trumpf 1967, 27f lists the editions.
4. This translation follows Veloudis' edition, though I have retained the more numerous chapter headings from Pallis' edition.
5. Leigh Fermor 1958, 187.
6. Gleixner 1961, 103–111.
7. Stoneman 1991, 1994, 2007, 2008. Jouanno 2002 strongly prefers a third century AD date. In part it is a matter of definition, since a text like the *Alexander Romance* can never be said to have a fixed form; every re-copying or recitation is a rewriting.
8. Especially Stoneman 1991, 28–32 and Stoneman 2007, lxxiii–lxxxiii.
9. Because this was the earliest version of the *Romance* to be studied, by C. Müller in 1846, the chapter divisions he devised for it had to be applied also to A and beta. But

epsilon cannot be divided into the same chapters because its structure is quite different. Gamma was edited in three volumes by Lauenstein 1962, Engelmann 1963 and Parthe 1969, and re-edited by Stoneman (only volume I containing book 1 has so far appeared: Stoneman 2007. Volume II is due for publication in 2012). Gamma has been excellently translated into French by Corinne Jouanno 2009.

10. Jouanno 2002, 361–77.
11. Moennig 1987, 41–45; Trumpf 1967 had identified six. The fullest version is the MS at Eton College, cod. 163.
12. Lolos 1983 and Konstantinopoulos 1983, Mitsakis 1967 (see Trumpf 1967 and Moennig 1987; paraphrase in Gleixner 1961) and Mitsakis 1970. See Stoneman 2008, 244.
13. Trumpf 1967, 22; Moennig 1987, 34; there are 10 manuscripts.
14. Moennig 1987, 28ff. The Serbian text has been edited by Christians 1991.
15. Bielefeldt 1951, 13. The Czech version, however, is based on the medieval Latin version of the *Romance*, the *Historia de Proeliis*.
16. Bratke 1899; Stoneman 2011, chapter 13.
17. Jouanno 2002, Veloudis 1968.
18. Holton 1973.
19. Wagner 1881, Reichmann 1963.
20. Holton 1974.
21. Moennig 2004.
22. Veloudis 1968, 138.
23. Veloudis 1968, 140. Another version of this text is published by Papamichael 1981.
24. Veloudis 1968, 169ff.
25. Veloudis 1968, 173.
26. Veloudis 1968, 174.

NOTES

27. See Veloudis 1968, 181–3.
28. Veloudis 1968, 194ff.
29. Veloudis 1968, 200–1.
30. Veloudis 1968, 20.5
31. This episode occurs also in the *Salvation of Sinners* by Agapios Londos, apparently its first appearance in modern Greek literature: Veloudis 1968, 200.
32. Evliya 2010, 17. In another place (333) he places this event ‘882 years before the Prophet’.
33. Evliya 2010, 4.
34. Berschin 1988, 217.
35. Weiss 1988, 185–7.
36. Trahoulias 1997.
37. Veloudis 1989, λδ’.
38. Yet in 157 Alexander also shows himself aware that, once dead, a small piece of land will be all he requires.
39. Veloudis 1989, μβ’.
40. Some of the piquant contrasts and similarities of Alexander and Jesus are explored by Amitay 2010.

The Book of Alexander the Great

- ch. 2. **Ektanebos**. Nectanebos in the *AR*, the historical Pharaoh Nectanebo II (Nekht-hor-heb).
- Lenthia**. Possibly meant for Olynthos.
- ch. 4. The prophecy is fulfilled in ch. 99. A similar episode occurs in the sixth-century Syriac *Romance of Julian*.
- Astrologer**. The ancients made no distinction between astrologers and astronomers, and neither does this text.
- ch. 8. **distinguished for charm**. The *AR* has instead ‘will be an avenger of his father’. On the Egyptian theology involved, see Stoneman 2008, 20.

- ch.9. **Magi**. The term designates the seers of ancient Persia.
- ch.13. **Bucephalus**. Various reasons were given for Bucephalus' name in antiquity, including the idea that he had a head like a bull's. The author of the *Phyllada* has chosen perhaps the most probable.
- ch.14. **Hellenes**. In Byzantine usage, the term refers to the pagan Greeks of antiquity, as distinct from the Christian Byzantine Greeks, who are Rhomaioi.
- Eparchy of Gastouni**. Byzantine terms for the region of ancient Elis.
- ch.15. The account of the Olympic Games is much longer in gamma, and full of Byzantine detail: Jouanno 2009, 56ff.
- ch.17. **Koumanoi**. Historically, a people of the central Caucasus.
- ch.21. **Anaxarchus of Pelagonia**. In *AR*, he is called Pausanias of the Thessalonians.
- Solomon**. See Proverbs 2.16–18
- ch.23. **River Mestos**. I.e. Nestos, in Thrace.
- ch.26. **Helladites**. The people of Greece (Hellas).
- ch.28. **Philones**. Usually Pheidon in *AR*.
- ch.30. **Antigon**. I.e. Antigonos.
- ch.31. **'golden spur' troops**. *Χρυσοπτερνιστεράτους*.
- ch.32. **Kantarkouses**. An invented name.
- Poll-tax**. The Ottoman *haraç*.
- ch.33. **chrysobull**. The term refers to a letter signed by the emperor of Byzantium.
- voivode**. A provincial governor in the Ottoman Empire: see also chs. 70, 101–2, 126–7, 189.
- Alexander's lance**. In *AR* (gamma only) Alexander makes the Amazons a gift of his lance to worship. The legendary Kaineus also demanded that people worship his spear.

- Myrtle leaves.** An authentic detail, as crowns of golden myrtle leaves have been found in the Macedonian tombs at Vergina.
- ch.40. **God of Sabaoth.** An expression characteristic of the Old Testament; see ch. 82, 'the most high'.
- ch.46. **Athens.** The idea that Athens is the 'capital' of Greece reflects no historical reality. The philosophers are a mixed bunch: Diogenes the Cynic was a real contemporary of Alexander, the rest are imaginary.
- ch.47. **Alamannoi.** A German people.
- ch.52. **Apollo.** The author regards Apollo as the chief god of pagan peoples (also of the Romans, ch. 59), and a 'false god' (ch. 56). But he is not among the gods Alexander meets bound in Hades in ch. 187.
- ch.55. **Vatalia.** An imaginary name.
- ch.57. **Lacedaimonia.** Lacedaimon (Sparta) is not in the 'west', and the name may be intended for Lucania.
- ch.61. **Nebuchadnezzar.** There seems to be a conflation of the Babylonian captivity of the Jews with the conquest of Jerusalem by the Roman Emperor Titus in AD 70.
- ch.65–66. **The Book of the Hellenes.** This is the Book of Daniel: the prophecy is in chapter 8.
- ch.69. **Konis.** Unidentifiable.
- ch.70. **Seleuceia.** This is indeed in Cilicia, but the Antioch founded by Antiochos is in south-east Asia Minor, not in Thrace, nor on the Black Sea. Byzas was the legendary founder of Byzantium.
- ch.76. **River Kasandra.** Unidentifiable; the name is borrowed from the Trojan prophetess.
- ch.84. **Jeremiah.** The prophet plays an important role in the *Phyllada*: see also chs. 107, 121.
- ch.92. **The Blessed Ones.** The prophecy is fulfilled in ch. 150.

- ch.93. **Joshua, Goliath, Sampson.** All characters from Hebrew legend. Goliath is designated 'Hellene' because he is not a worshipper of the God of Israel.
- ch.94. **a lake of very cold water.** Historically, Alexander's illness was caused by swimming in the River Calycadnus at Tarsus; the *AR* correctly locates the episode in Cilicia.
- ch.97. **Nektanebos.** The spelling has changed since the opening chapters.
- ch.99. The miracle fulfils (N)Ektanebos' prophecy in ch. 4.
- ch.111. **Babylon.** Historically, Babylon surrendered to Alexander; the attack by flooding described was a stratagem of Cyrus the Younger.
- ch.112. **Sosochos.** The reference is to the legendary Egyptian Pharaoh whom Greeks usually called Sesonchosis or Sesostris. See M. Malaise, 'Sesostris, Pharaon de légende et de l'histoire', *Chronique d'Egypte* 41 (1966), 244–272. The name appears in various forms in the *Phyllada*: Sosanchos in 119, Sosonchos in 146, Sonsochos in 187.
- ch.119. **Daphnaion.** Unidentifiable. Xerxes was murdered in 465 BC.
- ch.123. **The Armenian River.** Called the River Stranga in the *AR*.
- ch.135. **Kantarkouses and Ariobarzanes.** Darius was murdered by two of his noblemen, named Satibarzanes and Barsaentes according to Arrian 3.21.10, in 330 BC. Quintus Curtius 5.12.15 has Bessus and Nabarzanes. In *AR* the murderers are Bessus (who actually proclaimed himself king after Darius' death) and Ariobarzanes.
- ch.138. **The City of the Persians.** I.e. Persepolis.

NOTES

- ch. 139. **Roxandra.** Alexander's wife Roxane was not the daughter of the Persian king but of a Bactrian chieftain, Oxyartes (whose existence is fleetingly acknowledged in *Phyllada* 212).
- ch. 143. **Krises.** I.e. Croesus, the sixth-century BC king of Lydia.
- ch. 147. **edge of the world.** Alexander, following Aristotle, believed that the end of the world would be visible from the summit of the Hindu Kush.
- ch. 148. **Queen Sevira.** The legendary Queen Semiramis of Babylon.
- ch. 149. **Dog-heads.** See the fascinating book by David Gordon White, *Myths of the Dog-Man* (Chicago 1991).
- ch. 150. **Blessed Ones.** As foretold in ch. 92. Their leader Evaenthes is named Dandamis in *AR*, following the historical sources.
- ch. 165. **Alphios River.** The name is transferred from the river of Elis in Greece to the Hydaspes where this battle was fought.
- ch. 172. **Klitemnestra.** The queen has wandered in unexpectedly from the legend of Agamemnon.
- ch. 174. **Amazons.** The fullest study is J. Blok, *The Early Amazons: Modern and Ancient Perspectives on a Persistent Myth* (Leiden 1991). See also Ken Dowden, 'The Amazons: development and functions', *Rheinisches Museum* 140 (1997), 97–128.
- ch. 178. **kentenaria.** The Latin word, 'hundreds', apparently designates a measure of quantity.
- ch. 179. **Bometros.** Not in other versions of the story.
- ch. 180. **Goths.** Apart from the Goths (replacing Gog) and the Dog-heads, the names of the peoples are fantastical.
Siakenthes. In *AR* the substance is called *asynchyton*, an equally puzzling term.

Extraordinary machine. The Catalan Map (1375) depicts two trumpeters posted by the Wall of Gog and Magog; they still show up in Mercator's Map though the legendary Gog and Magog are no longer shown. A.R. Anderson, *Alexander's Gate, Gog and Magog and the Enclosed Nations* (Cambridge, Mass 1932), 101–3.

ch. 181. **Evagrithes.** Eurymithres of the Bebryces in *AR*.

Kondavlouses. Candaules in *AR*.

ch. 201. **Job.** See the Book of Job in the Hebrew Bible.

ch. 206. **Sayings of Alexander.** Not in the *AR*. Various collections of Alexander's sayings are known from Greek and related traditions.

ch. 208. The passage in square brackets is omitted from Pallis' text.

In *AR*, the poisoner is Alexander's cupbearer Iollas at the instigation of his father Antipater, the regent of Macedon.

ch. 211. **hustled Alexander inside.** The Greek actually says 'Philip split a living mule and hustled Alexander inside'. I cannot fathom this idiom, if that is what it is.

ch. 212. **The Will.** The provisions are mostly fantastical, though some real names occur. Thrace fell to the lot of Lysimachos in the period of the Successors, and Oxyartes was actually the ruler of Bactria when Alexander went there. Ptolemy did indeed make Egypt his own, as Seleukos did the Asian heartland.

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